

Barishal's BSCIC industrial city counts the cost of neglect

Development works to resume soon, officials say

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The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation's (BSCIC) industrial city in Barishal is yet to utilise its full potential due to a lack of infrastructural facilities.

Currently its production volume and employment generation are just half of what it was estimated to be capable of, according to BSCIC officials and industrialists.

Against this backdrop, they called for speedy initiatives to develop the infrastructure to create a "model industrial city".

Established in 1960, it is the largest industrial city in Bangladesh, covering 130.31 acres of land in Barishal's Kawnia area.

And from the very beginning, the infrastructure facilities present at the estate were not that good, they said.

Even the roads are very narrow and dilapidated while a lack of streetlights drastically reduces visibility after dark, making movement risky.

Due to these reasons, only a few companies have gone into production since 2000, said Jahurul Islam, an official of the BSCIC.

There are no more than 12 or 14 active manufacturing facilities, utilising around 150 of the 470 plots available in the area and employing about 8,000 people.

Most of the companies active in the industrial city are trading based.

Besides, companies that had taken at least 10 to 12 plots have completely ceased activities.

"However, if the infrastructure facilities are developed, production and employment would at least double," Islam said.

Over Tk 650 crore has been invested in this BSCIC area and if the infrastructure was developed, it would be possible to allot 100 more plots, he added.

Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Fortune Shoes, said when it rains at the industrial city, the ground sinks and this leads to accidents.

"No one wants to come here while the production environment is totally hampered due to poor infrastructure facilities. So we want speedy implementation of the



A lack of adequate infrastructure at the BSCIC industrial city in Barishal has left the estate in a state of disarray. Clockwise, the derelict BSCIC office in the area is long overdue for an upgrade while the development of a new manufacturing unit and road has been stalled for issues raised by the Barishal City Corporation.

ongoing infrastructure development projects," Rahman added.

Development work worth Tk 71.5 crore started in the area last October. This includes betterment of the roads, boundary walls and lighting facilities.

According to the BSCIC authorities, almost all the commercial activities in the area have come to a standstill due to issues raised by the city corporation.

"Meanwhile, filling of 37 acres of low-lying land has been stopped by Barishal City Corporation (BCC)," said Md Jalish Mahmud, deputy general manager of the BSCIC.

However, BCC Mayor Serniabat Sadik Abdullah told journalists that they did not order the BSCIC to stop development works.

"We ordered them to not fill low lands (extracting earth from rivers) using dredger machines

as it is totally illegal and some industrialists already grabbed some road side land. So, we ordered them to return land they grabbed," Abdullah said.

After visiting the area, it was found that all development works had been put on halt.

BSCIC's Mahmud said if all the development works were not completed by June next year, the allocated money would be returned.

People working from home need better protection: ILO

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

People that work from home need better protection, especially since their numbers have greatly increased due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, according to a report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued yesterday.

"Since working from home occurs in a private environment, it is often considered 'invisible'," the ILO said in its report styled, 'Working from home. From invisibility to decent work'.

These people are usually worse off financially than those who work outside their homes, even when it comes to higher-skilled professions.

On average, home-based workers earn 13 per cent less than their traditional counterparts in the UK, 22 per cent less in the US, 25 per cent less in South Africa and about 50 per cent less in Argentina, India and Mexico.

They also face greater health and safety risks, the report said.

Besides, they also have less access to training compared to non home-based workers, it added.

The report also shows that home workers do not receive the same level of social protection as other workers and are less likely to be a part of a trade union or be covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, the number of home-based workers worldwide stood at about 260 million, 56 per cent of which were women, representing roughly 7.9 per cent of global employment.

They include tele workers who work remotely on a continual basis and a vast number of people who are involved in the production of goods that cannot be automated, such as embroidery, handicrafts and electronics assembly.

Another category includes digital

platform workers and service providers, such as processing insurance claims, copy-editing and data annotation for artificial intelligence systems.

In the first months of the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, an estimated one-in-five workers found themselves working from home.

Data for the whole year, once it is available, is expected to show a substantial increase in home-based workers compared to the previous year. The growth of working from home is likely to continue in the coming years.

This brings renewed urgency to the need to address the issues facing home workers and their employers, the report said.

Home working is often poorly regulated and compliance with existing laws remains a challenge. In many cases, home workers are classified as independent contractors and are therefore excluded from the scope of labour legislation.

Many countries around the world have legislation, sometimes complemented by collective agreements, that addresses various decent work deficits associated with working from home.

But still, only 10 ILO member states have ratified Convention No. 177, that promotes equality of treatment between home workers and other wage earners.

"Few already have a comprehensive policy on working from home," said Janine Berg, ILO senior economist and one of the report's authors.

The report includes concrete recommendations to make home working more visible and therefore, better protected.

For industrial home workers, the report underlines the importance of facilitating their transition to the formal economy by extending legal protections, improving compliance, generalising written contracts, providing access to social security and making home workers aware of their rights.



Working from home is often poorly regulated and compliance with existing laws remains a challenge.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE



GLOBAL BUSINESS

Indonesia could be Asia's next Islamic finance hub

ANN/JAKARTA POST

Indonesia ended 2020 with record highs in Islamic finance development, with the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report (SGIER) 2020-2021 raising the ranking of Indonesia's Islamic finance industry to 4th from 5th, after Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Islamic finance development indicator (IFDI) for 2020 revealed that Indonesia's rankings also rose from 4th to 2nd in Islamic finance development and from 8th to 7th in Islamic financial assets, with the latter increasing 15 percent to US\$99 billion.

The National Islamic Economics and Finance Committee (KNEKS), which acts as the conductor of a giant orchestra that comprises Indonesia's Islamic economics architecture, has developed an integrated map of the country's Islamic economics and finance ecosystem that gives an eagle's eye view of the roles and positions of stakeholders, players, regulators, infrastructures, IT, human resources and the public.

It has done a tremendous job in encouraging every aspect of the ecosystem to make considerable improvements, despite its modest political power. In Islamic commercial finance, Indonesia entered 2021 with a plan for a grand transformation: the megamerger of the country's three largest Islamic banks, Bank Syariah Mandiri (BSM), BNI Syariah and BRI Syariah, to establish the state-owned Islamic bank Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI) in February 2021.

Creating a bank with Rp 21.5 trillion (\$1.5 billion) in equity (as of November 2020), the BUKU III category BSI will have strong capital to compete in Indonesia's



A Bank Mandiri Syariah employee serves a customer at the Islamic lender's Central Jakarta office.

Islamic banking sector. The merger will scale up its capability and capacity to compete at both national and international levels and thereby step up the sector's game, which has long been deemed as having snail's pace growth.

While it will be the only Indonesian Islamic bank in the BUKU III category (the rest are still BUKU II or BUKU I), BSI plans to step up to the highest rank of BUKU IV by the second quarter of 2022. With Rp 232.5 trillion in assets, amounting to almost half of Indonesia's total Islamic banking assets, BSI will be counted among the top 10

banks in Indonesia as well as the top 10 Islamic banks in the world. Stronger capital, wide-ranging and substantial transformations in IT infrastructure and digitalization of products and services, as well as significant employee upskilling, are some critical points BSI should be aware of to win the battle.

In Islamic social finance, Indonesia has tons of potential in faith-based social funds for zakat (obligatory alms) and voluntary charitable donations like waqf, infaq, and sadaqah. While struggling to collect zakat (realizing only 4.4 percent of potential zakat in 2019), Indonesia has been giving more

attention to waqf. Indonesia is estimated to have Rp 180 trillion in potential cash waqf and 11,000 hectares in current land waqf. Recently, it introduced waqf sukuk, or cash waqf-linked sukuk (CWLS), an Islamic bond financed by waqf.

The government in March 2020 issued CWLS SW001, its first CWLS, through a private placement scheme with the Indonesia Waqf Board (BWI). In Islamic microfinance, micro waqf bank (BWM) is the current trend, with Vice President Ma'ruf Amin recently asking the industry to boost their development. BWM is not a bank, but waqf-

NEWS In Brief

Pandemic boosts profits at India's Infosys

AFP, Mumbai

Indian software giant Infosys Wednesday reported a 16.6 percent jump in quarterly net profits, boosted by a string of lucrative new deals and growing demand for digital services during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bangalore-headquartered firm said its net profit rose to 51.97 billion rupees (\$710 million) for the October-December quarter, up from 44.57 billion a year earlier. The third quarter is traditionally a weak one for India's IT industry, but CEO Sail Parekh said new partnerships with top global companies such as Daimler and Rolls-Royce had helped to boost the firm's bottom line.

Quarterly revenue at India's second-largest IT company climbed 12.3 percent to 259.27 billion rupees from a year ago.

India's software outsourcing industry has proved a rare bright spot for the beleaguered economy, with Infosys and rival Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) both offering employees salary hikes in 2020 even as the country faces a prolonged slowdown and high unemployment.

Qualcomm eyes challenge to Apple, Intel with \$1.4b deal for chip startup

REUTERS

Qualcomm Inc on Wednesday said it will acquire Nuvia Inc, a chip startup founded by Apple Inc veterans, for \$1.4 billion, with plans to put the firm's technology into its smartphone, laptop and automotive processors.

The deal marks a big push by Qualcomm to reestablish a leading position in chip performance after several years of high-profile patent licensing litigation with rival Apple and regulatory authorities.

It also comes amid a change in the helm with Qualcomm announcing this month that Cristiano Amon, its current president and head of its silicon division, will replace outgoing CEO Steven Mollenkopf, effective June 30.

Founded by three of Apple's former top semiconductor executives in charge of iPhone chips, Nuvia has been working on a custom CPU core design that it had said would be used in server chips.



A Qualcomm sign is pictured at the Mobile World Congress in Shanghai, China.

REUTERS/FILE