

Using technologies is key to speeding up ADP execution

NAWSHAD AHMED and AKM KAMRUZZAMAN

THE implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in Bangladesh has been severely affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the last 17 months. As the country entered the new financial year on July 1, now is an appropriate time to review last year's ADP execution, learn from the challenges faced, and take stringent measures to improve the rate of implementation this year.

up of project-related procurements, delay in release of imported goods from the ports and late recruitment of project staff and consultants. Thirdly, inadequate monitoring and supervision of field activities to ensure quality implementation due to extended lockdowns and closure of offices. That the health ministry performed poorly in executing last year's budget is well known, but there are other ministries whose execution levels were also less than 50 percent.

Bangladesh needs to address the infrastructure gaps in all sectors through increased public investment, and ADP is the main channel to fill this gap.

mechanisms to continue their project execution in both public and private sectors. In Bangladesh, the banking sector showed remarkable resilience and their capital adequacy, asset quality, profitability and liquidity have been praiseworthy during the last two years. The NGOs have also been maintaining their critical operations at a satisfactory level. They have been building awareness of infection prevention measures among the communities, distributed personal hygiene products to the poor households and supplied personal protective equipment to staff who work on the frontline. We can learn from their experiences and adopt the good practices.

channel to fill this gap. However, the government needs to prioritise only the good projects. The ministries should be strict about screening and appraisal of projects so that the most important ones are included in the ADP and they are adequately funded. There is a critical need to enhance technical capacity in the government ministries in these areas. Timely implementation of good projects can help increase the growth rate. We need to enhance ADP implementation which will contribute to achieving pre-Covid GDP growth rate.

The total stimulus packages given during this pandemic by the government so far amount to Tk 128,441 crore (4.59 percent of GDP) from which Tk 940 billion (73 percent) is for the private investors, and the rest for the poorest and disadvantaged people and families. This shows that a significant amount of public resources have been made available to the private sector. The developed countries that have made good progress on vaccination and contained the rate of Covid-19 transmission have resumed their normal economic activities, and our export opportunities to those countries have reopened now. We need to give a boost to public sector projects, to enhance employment opportunities and effective demand, and increase export. The government has made a policy move towards supply side push by incentivising the business sector through such measures as reducing corporate taxes, lowering bank interest rates and allowing delayed repayment of bank loans, in addition to giving a number of stimulus packages. In order to match these incentives, demand side measures should be strengthened as well, by enhancing project implementation, for an early recovery of the economy.

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The current and last two years' ADP have had the same Covid-19 related challenges that the implementing ministries should take into account and tackle from the early part of this fiscal year. These are, first of all, the challenge of mobilising the projected revenue from internal sources, borrowing from financial institutions and securing the expected foreign loans and grants. Secondly, slow pick-

The current year's budget (2021-2022) is the 50th budget of Bangladesh. The total amount of ADP proposed in the budget is Tk 225,324 crore, which is 6.5 percent of GDP. The five sectors which received the highest ADP allocation are: transportation and communication, power and fuel, housing and community facilities, education, and health. The first two sectors have been allocated 48 percent of total ADP allocation. These five

sectors have a total number of 743 projects out of a total of 1,426 projects included in the ADP. A huge amount of construction work is included in the top five sectoral projects requiring procurement and physical work. As many as 141 projects have foreign grants and loan components in them, with a total amount of USD 41.6 billion. Due to various reasons, 24.1 percent of the projects included in the ADP have been revised from one to three times already.

Those ministries which didn't achieve up to 50 percent implementation level last year should undertake a planned approach to the implementation of their projects from the beginning of this year. They should start floating the tenders, followed by assessment of the bids and complete the procurement formalities in good time. In case of construction projects, the government should allow professionals like the engineers and workers to work in the same spirit as the health sector professionals who are considered as essential staff, provided they follow the Covid-19 health regulations and get vaccinated. Instead of keeping the offices closed, the government staff should work remotely during the lockdown period and continue their operations.

Many countries have experimented and devised good remote working

Grin and bear it: How economics won Kipchoge an Olympic gold



C RASHAD SHABAB

ON Sunday August 8, like many running enthusiasts, I watched in awe as Eliud Kipchoge delivered a masterclass in marathoning to become the first man since 1980 to successfully defend an Olympic gold in that discipline. But as an economist, I was also enthralled to observe that Kipchoge was using insights from experimental economics to achieve this amazing feat. What is more, knowledge of these insights can help all of us to rise to challenging circumstances, just like Kipchoge.

Nobel Prize winning economist Daniel Kahneman describes in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*. We all understand that our emotional state can affect our facial expressions: when we are sad we frown, and when we are happy we smile. But experiments have found that the reverse is also true: the facial expressions we adopt can alter our emotional, psychological and even physiological state. Stimulating the facial muscles associated with smiling such as by holding a pencil sideways in one's mouth can elevate measures of mood and subjective wellbeing. The opposite is also true so that simulating a frown by holding a pencil protruding from a pout can make people feel unhappy.

Athletes had many reasons to frown during the Tokyo men's marathon. It was far hotter than is optimal for marathoning. The course was very tight in parts with turns and twists that can break a runner's rhythm. The fierce competition led to overcrowded drink-stations with runners elbowing and running into one another. On three separate occasions, overcrowding prevented Kipchoge from getting the drinks that he needed to fuel his race. Expressing frustration might have been a natural reaction to these impediments, especially during a marathon which by its nature leaves athletes dehydrated with depleted blood sugar and so less in control of their emotions. Evidence from experimental economics suggests that

allowing such negativity to take hold is likely to have adverse psychological and physiological consequences, to the detriment of athletic performance.

But Kipchoge's signature smile uses the same forces to trick his mind into feeling less of the strain from these stressors than it otherwise would. This makes it easier for him to exert the physical effort that is necessary to succeed at a distance as challenging as the marathon (students of Greek

history will recall that the Athenian messenger Pheidippides who inspired the modern race died from exhaustion after running the distance). And just as the smile played a part in helping Kipchoge break the world record in Berlin in 2018 and the two-hour barrier in 2020, last weekend it also helped him retain his Olympic title.

But it is not just elite endurance athletes who can benefit from understanding and using these forces.

Life, like marathoning, can be a long, arduous journey that is pitted with challenges and obstacles. Stressful situations can arise in professional, social, and personal settings. Feelings of anger, sadness, or frustration are normal in these circumstances.



Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge celebrates after winning the men's marathon final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in Sapporo on August 8, 2021.

Life, like marathoning, can be a long, arduous journey that is pitted with challenges and obstacles. Stressful situations can arise in professional, social, and personal settings. Feelings of anger, sadness, or frustration are normal in these circumstances. But allowing these emotions to take hold might prevent us from responding to these trials with the best of our physical or intellectual capabilities. We will only be able to perform to our full potential if we can remove ourselves from the grip of these powerful negative emotions. Admittedly, this is easier said than done. But something as simple as pretending to smile can set us on the right path. After all, if putting on a smile can help Kipchoge defend his gold medal, imagine what it could do for the rest of us!

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QUOTABLE Quote

HELEN MIRREN (born 1945) English actor

I think every woman in our culture is a feminist. They may refuse to articulate it, but if you were to take any woman back 40 years and say, 'Is this a world you want to live in?' They would say, 'No.'

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Poll numbers
- 5 Terre Haute's river
- 11 Biz bigwig
- 12 Broad way
- 13 Different
- 14 Make numb
- 15 Parrot or puppy
- 16 Disease cause
- 17 Trial setting
- 19 Status -
- 22 Make suitable
- 24 Wide inlet
- 26 Tenor Carreras
- 27 Mosquito attack
- 28 Church replies
- 30 Doofuses
- 31 Marks a ballot
- 32 African lilies
- 34 Linen source

DOWN

- 1 Profound
- 2 Wheel bar
- 3 Precedent setters
- 4 Poker card
- 5 Tall boot
- 6 Wards off
- 7 Roof support
- 8 Plus
- 9 Take to court
- 10 Egg layer
- 16 Belly
- 18 Ready for business
- 19 TV with contestants
- 20 Golden Rule word
- 21 Lyric poems
- 22 Trojan War hero
- 23 Capitol top
- 25 Clarinet's kin
- 29 Greet a general
- 30 Cereal buy
- 33 Jacket flap
- 34 Phobia
- 36 Pro votes
- 37 Largest amount
- 38 Janitor's tool
- 39 Gorilla, e.g.
- 40 Model buy
- 41 Pro vote

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

E	R	A	S	F	R	E	S	H		
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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT