



Scraps of red coloured plastic of the same type left out to dry in the sun at Kamrangirchar prior to being shipped off to be turned into recycled plastic pellets. Informal waste pickers collect discarded plastic for sale to traders, who then sort according to grade, shred and wash those for export. The polymers undergo a melting and compression process to be turned into recycled plastic pellets, ready to be moulded into a new product. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Go for long-term plans for plastic recycling

A study suggests

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should undertake long-term plans to establish large scale plastic recycling and organic waste composting facilities to cope with the future growth of waste generation, suggested a new study revealed yesterday.

Solid wastes generated here comprise mostly organic materials with low calorific values, said the study on "Current Scenario of Circular Economy in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects".

Circular economies can actually be built by Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza), said Assistant Prof Mohammad Sujauddin of North South University's environmental science and management department.

He presented a keynote paper on the study at a seminar on the topic organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in Dhaka.

Regenerative by design to gradually decouple growth from the consumption of finite resources, a circular economy eliminates waste and pollution, circulates products and materials (at their highest value) and regenerates nature.

The resilient systems can be created in special economic zones through strict policy enforcement by the government, mainly command and control in the input, processing and output for each industry, said Sujauddin.

The government's target to bring



industries from metropolitan cities into special economic zones is certainly the first step towards industrial symbiosis for Bangladesh but the environmental and social considerations are essential, he said.

Beza must take precautions through regulatory reforms so as to not face detrimental consequences, he added.

"It is wiser to choose a sustainable track for industrialisation during the primary phase rather than changing the course after facing severe repercussions," said Sujauddin.

The recycle of waste mainly improves quality of life, said Naser Ezaz Bijoy, president of the Foreign Investors'

Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Circular economies also ensure security of raw materials and job creation, he said, adding that recycling waste could create seven lakh jobs as per the European Union.

Bijoy, also chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh, said from 2025, some 78 per cent of brands would gradually phase out suppliers not working on a net zero transition.

Net zero refers to a state when the amount of greenhouse gases being produced equals the amount removed from the atmosphere.

Similarly, some 61 per cent of

companies have announced that they will not invest in companies which will not work on a net zero plan, he said.

Economic development should not be at the expense of the environment, said FBCCI President Md Jashim Uddin.

Annual per capita plastic consumption in Bangladesh is seven to eight kilogrammes but in the US and Japan it is over 100 kilogrammes due to the fact that they can manage plastic waste well, he said.

A circular economy mainly ensures reduction, recycling and reuse of goods which also reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, said Md Shahab Uddin, minister for environment, forest and climate change.

By 2035, Bangladesh will annually generate 4.62 million tonnes of e-waste, he said.

Bangladesh has been experiencing incredible growth, said Eun Joo Allison Yi, senior environmental specialist of Environment, Natural Resources & Blue Economy Global Practice of the World Bank.

Jobs and industrial growth go hand in hand and cleaner production and policy formulation for safeguarding the environment are important, she said.

Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun said he would form a separate cell in his ministry for managing waste with focus on circular economy.

The minister also advocated for use of technologies for turning waste into assets for the circular economy.

NBR examines scope for tax rebate on sukuk income

SOHEL PARVEZ

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is examining the scope for giving tax rebate on the income of individuals who are investing in the shariah-based sukuk bond, said a senior official of the tax authority yesterday.

It was recommended by the Finance Division, which cited that such a benefit was already in place for treasury bonds.

The government raised Tk 8,000 crore issuing sukuk bonds for the first time in fiscal year 2020-21 to lure investors who are reluctant to put their money into interest-bearing T-bills, bonds and other government securities.

During the current fiscal year, the government borrowed Tk 5,000 crore by sukuk, said officials.

The aim was also for making use of excess liquidity that Shariah-based banks were sitting on for years as they were unable to invest the funds in the T-bills and bonds.

A sukuk is an Islamic financial certificate, similar to a treasury bond and structured to generate returns in compliance with Islamic finance principles.

In its letter to the NBR in October last year, the Finance Division said sukuk was an Islamic security issued by the government.

But there is no provision for tax benefits for individuals' investment in the tool, it said, suggesting on providing the opportunity of tax rebates such as that for treasury bonds.

Bhutan GDP growth to rebound to 5.1pc World Bank says

ANN, Thimphu

The Bhutanese economy is expected to grow by 5.1 per cent in the financial year 2021-22, according to the World Bank's "Global Economic Prospects" report, released on January 11.

The report attributes the projected economic growth to a rebound in investment and external demand (exports).

Bhutan's growth, it states, has been "revised down" because of Covid-19 protocols, delays in infrastructure projects caused by migrant labour restrictions, and a stagnant tourism sector.

According to economists, a strong GDP growth has a large impact on people's livelihoods, as it fuels job creation and income increases, which lead to increased spending by consumers on goods and services.

However, an official familiar with the issue said that the projected 5.1 per cent growth would not be enough for the economy to rebound to the pre-pandemic size.

"The impact of the pandemic has been so strong that the economy needs a large amount of growth to rebound to its pre-pandemic size," he said. Bhutan's economy, he said, was one of the hardest hit in the region because of its small size and the strict Covid-19 measures.

The GDP dropped to Nu 171.57 billion (B) in 2020 from Nu 178.56B in the previous year. The GDP growth rate dropped to an all-time low of -10.08 per cent in 2020.

The report states that contact-intensive sectors, like trade and hotels are still below pre-pandemic levels.

The World Bank's projection is higher than the government's estimate.

Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering in a recent meeting with the press said that the economic growth in 2021 would be neutral or zero per cent.

However, the government's estimation is for the calendar year 2021, while the World Bank's projections for the fiscal year 2021-22.

According to the World Bank report, the economic growth of Bhutan's neighbour, India, is expected to be 8.3 per cent in the current financial year and 8.7 per cent in 2022-23.

US grocery shortages deepen as pandemic dries supplies

REUTERS

High demand for groceries combined with soaring freight costs and Omicron-related labor shortages are creating a new round of backlogs at processed food and fresh produce companies, leading to empty supermarket shelves at major retailers across the United States.

Growers of perishable produce across the West Coast are paying nearly triple pre-pandemic trucking rates to ship things like lettuce and berries before they spoil. Shay Myers, CEO of Owyhee Produce, which grows onions, watermelons and asparagus along the border of Idaho and Oregon, said he has been holding off shipping onions to retail distributors until freight costs go down.

Myers said transportation disruptions in the last three weeks, caused by a lack of truck drivers and recent highway-blocking storms, have led to a doubling of freight costs for fruit and vegetable producers, on top of already-elevated pandemic prices. "We typically will ship, East Coast to West Coast - we used to do it for about \$7,000," he said. "Today it's somewhere between \$18,000 and \$22,000."

Birds Eye frozen vegetables maker Conagra Brands' CEO Sean Connolly told investors last week that supplies from its US plants could be constrained for at least the next month due to Omicron-related absences. Earlier this week, Albertsons CEO Vivek Sankaran said he expects the

supermarket chain to confront more supply chain challenges over the next four to six weeks as Omicron has put a dent in its efforts to plug supply chain gaps.

Shoppers on social media complained of empty pasta and meat aisles at some Walmart stores; a Meijer store in Indianapolis was swept bare of chicken; a Publix in Palm Beach, Florida was out of bath tissue and home hygiene products while Costco reinstated purchase limits on toilet paper at some stores in Washington state.

The situation is not expected to abate for at least a few more weeks, Katie Denis, vice president of communications and research at the Consumer Brands Association said, blaming the shortages on a scarcity of labor.

The consumer-packaged goods industry is missing around 120,000 workers out of which only 1,500 jobs were added last month, she said, while the National Grocer's Association said that many of its grocery store members were operating with less than 50 per cent of their workforce capacity.

US retailers are now facing roughly 12 per cent out of stock levels on food, beverages, household cleaning and personal hygiene products compared to 7-10 per cent in regular times.

The problem is more acute with food products were out of stock levels are running at 15 per cent, the Consumer Brands Association said.



Consumers have continued to stock up on groceries as they hunker down at home to curb the spread of the Omicron-variant.

PHOTO: AFP