

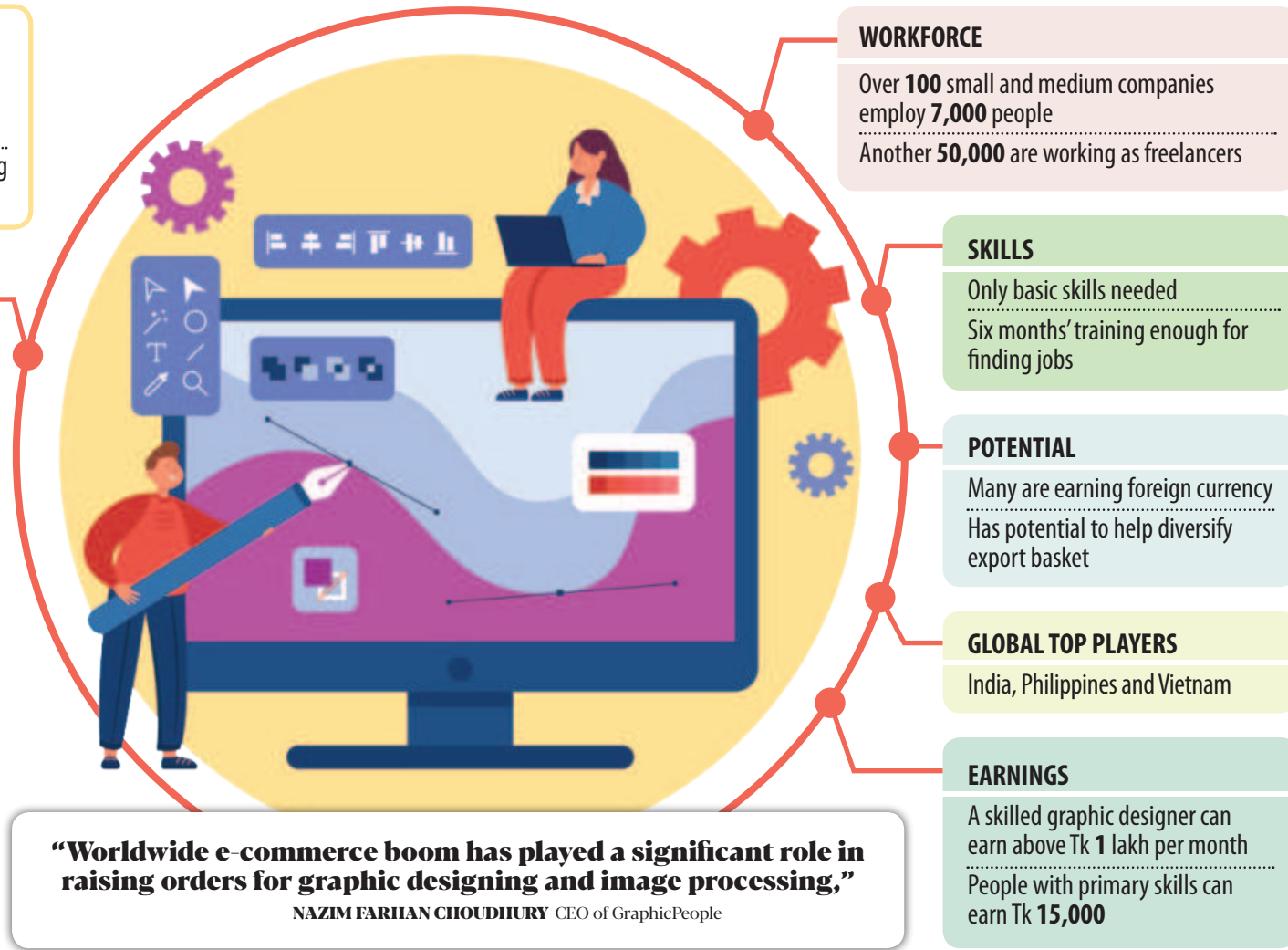
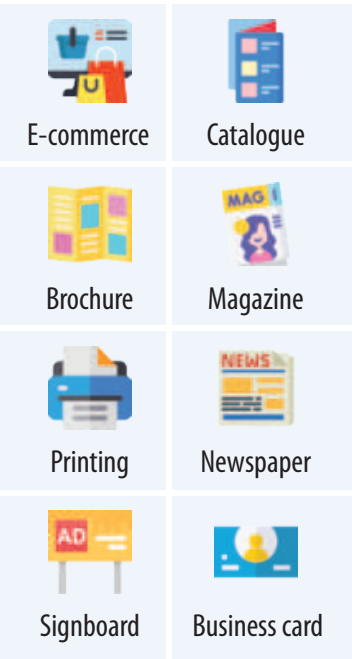
Star BUSINESS



AT A GLANCE

Graphic designing and image editing outsourcing thrived in last two years
Pandemic, e-commerce boom and rising digital business helped the sector grow

POPULAR WORK



GRAPHIC DESIGN, IMAGE EDITING

Creating jobs, bringing home dollars

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The outsourcing of graphic designing and image editing holds great promise for Bangladesh as many are already earning foreign currencies riding on the boom in digital businesses worldwide.

India, the Philippines and Vietnam have long been among the major markets for outsourcing for global clients, but Bangladesh has also become a favourite destination owing to lower prices and the ability to deliver large-scale work.

Currently, 7,000 people are working at more than 100 small and medium companies in the graphic designing and image editing segment of the country. Another 50,000 are working as freelancers, according to an estimate by industry people.

The growing demand for digital designs for e-commerce, catalogues, brochures, magazines, printings, newspapers, signboards, and business cards has created plenty of opportunities for local freelancers and firms.

"Worldwide, the e-commerce boom has played a significant role in raising orders for graphic design and image processing," said Nazim Farhan Choudhury, chief executive officer of GraphicPeople.

Located in Dhaka, GraphicPeople is an offshore studio providing digital print and production support services to advertising agencies and brands, and counts Dell and Microsoft among its

customers. It employs about 250 people.

With e-commerce and digital business thriving, the need for pictures and video has gone up. Large studios are flourishing in the global market.

The segment even has the potential to diversify the export basket as basic skills are needed to get jobs in graphic design and image processing, said industry people.

"What we are doing now is that we are providing backend editing and corrections. But we can be as large as the garment industry," Choudhury said.

He said the garment sector, which accounts for about 85 per cent of Bangladesh's over \$52 billion export earnings in the last fiscal year, has done a remarkable job. But, average salaries and export earnings per worker in the graphic designing and image editing segment are much higher than that of the apparel industry.

"The value-addition is about 20 per cent in the garment sector whereas it is close to 100 per cent in the graphic designing and image editing segment."

The outsourcing of graphic designing and image editing is part of the business process outsourcing sector and the broader IT-enabled services industry.

Bangladesh earned less than \$500 million from the exports of IT-enabled services in the last fiscal year, data from the Export Promotion Bureau showed.

However, the Bangladesh Association

of Software and Information Services (BASIS), the national trade body for software and IT-enabled services, put the figure at \$1.3 billion since a significant portion of the overseas income is either brought into the country through unofficial channels or is not fetched at all.

The global business process outsourcing market size was valued

India, the Philippines and Vietnam have long been among the major markets for outsourcing for global clients, but Bangladesh has also become a favourite destination owing to lower prices and the ability to deliver large-scale work

at \$251 billion in 2021 and expected to reach \$492 billion by 2028, said California-based newswire distribution network GlobeNewswire, citing data from SkyQuest Technology Consulting Pvt Ltd, an Indian firm.

Skill-based training with an emphasis on student loans and certification, recognising companies with more than 500 employees as economic zones, and treating IT-enabled services as emergency services could propel the industry to a higher level and consistently support clients, said Choudhury.

Mainly two groups of people work in the segment: individual freelancers working with marketplaces such as Upwork and Fiverr, and the other group that is employed by small and medium-sized firms.

Kamruzzaman Sishir, a top-rated character illustrator at Fiverr, a global online marketplace for freelance services, said: "It's a market with a huge potential."

But earnings depend on skills and there is stiff competition for the designing tasks that need basic skills.

"Creativity matters. Some people with a six-month training might not land a job in designing whereas someone can win many orders with the same amount of training thanks to creativity," Sishir added.

A skilled graphic designer and image editor can command six-figure salaries easily whereas someone with a lower level of skills struggles to earn Tk 15,000, according to the freelancer.

The KOW Company, a content post-production management company with a focus on image and image editing, began its journey in 2014 with a three-member team and a one-room office in Dhaka's Bangla Motor. Today, it has grown into a family of more than 500 individuals working with 25 studios globally and processing around 25,000 photos every day.

Kowser Ahmed Nirrob, CEO and founder

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Apparel export can hit \$95b by 2030 riding on MMF Study suggests

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Apparel exports from Bangladesh will cross \$95 billion by 2030 if the country can expand its share in the global market for manmade fibre (MMF) to 12 per cent from less than 5 per cent at present, according to a recent study.

MMF apparel items accounted for \$222 billion of the \$440 billion global garments market last year, when cotton-based products contributed \$190 billion.

As such, almost half of all apparel exports worldwide are of MMF products while 42 per cent are cotton-based garment items.

However, the picture is reverse in Bangladesh, where 72 per cent of the garment exports are cotton-based apparels and just 24 per cent are MMF, the study said.

Of the total \$42 billion apparel exports from Bangladesh in the last fiscal year, \$30 billion were cotton-based garment items

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, research director of the Policy Research Institute (PRI) and author of the study, presented the outcomes at a programme on "Man-made fibres for moving up the apparel value chain in the context of LDC graduation".

The event was organised by the planning ministry at the National Economic Council auditorium in Dhaka yesterday.

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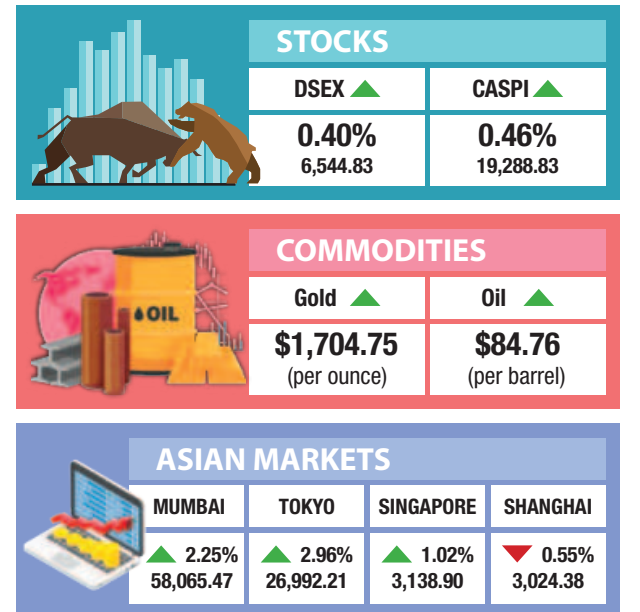
Bangladesh already accounts for 16 per cent of all cotton apparel shipments worldwide and the country will soon become the largest cotton based garments exporter as China, the largest supplier at present, has been losing its market share.

Global MMF apparel exports grew by 4 per cent while that of cotton-based items shrunk by 0.5 per cent annually between 2011 and 2019.

Cotton apparel exports then fell by some 15 per cent in 2020 while MMF garment shipments saw robust growth of 8 per cent in 2021.

The share of MMF apparel exports from China increased from 37 per cent of the country's total garment shipments in 2010 to 74 per cent in 2021.

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LIGHT ENGINEERING

Govt frames policy, aims to boost exports

SUKANTA HALDER

The government has issued a policy aiming to facilitate the acquisition of sustainable and advanced technology among light engineering industries in a bid to expedite development in the sector, according to a gazette notification issued last month.

Under the policy, low interest loans will be provided from a special fund for the purchase of new technologies as well as the development of existing ones so that entrepreneurs feel encouraged to mechanise their production process.

In addition, the Light Engineering Industry Development Policy 2022 looks to ensure infrastructural development, easy financing and industrial incentives for the sector during its implementation between 2022 and 2027.

This is the first time that the government has framed a supportive policy for the light engineering sector.

The industries ministry had issued a notification on September 29, saying the policy will help light engineering industries flourish and increase their overall contribution to the country's gross domestic product to 40 per cent by 2027.

In January 2020, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared light engineering as the product of the year to give it special attention for earning more foreign exchange through exporting various goods.

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Light engineering units such as this one on Sher-e-Bangla Road in Khulna city could soon get a shot in the arm thanks to a recently framed policy for the sector, under which low interest loans for purchasing sustainable and advanced technologies will be available.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Emerald Oil plans to export to Japan

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Emerald Oil Industries, one of the first rice bran oil domestically, plans to export its product to Japan, for which it has established a branch in the island nation last month.

In a disclosure posted on Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday, the rice bran oil producer said it set up a branch in Tokyo on September 20, 2022.

However, stocks of Emerald Oil Industries dropped 0.54 per cent to Tk 36.80 at the DSE.

The branch will be helpful in easily processing the exports, said Managing Director Md Afzal Hossain.

"Even if the quality of our products does not match theirs, we would be able to have modifications there and then sell, so we opened the branch," he said.

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