



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Discussants at a plenary session titled “Investing in Economic Zones: Progress and Priority Opportunities in Bangladesh” on the closing day of Bangladesh Business Summit 2023 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday. The panellists focused on raising skills of people, launching a new bankruptcy act and introducing advanced technology in logistics.

Favourable policy needed for economic zones to deliver

Entrepreneurs say at Bangladesh Business Summit

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government needs to ensure favourable policies regarding energy, taxes and others for special economic zones to meet expectations, said entrepreneurs at Bangladesh Business Summit 2023 yesterday.

They also urged for government policies to be predictable alongside proper logistics and efficient one-stop service (OSS) platforms to cater to all their needs.

They were addressing a plenary session titled “Investing in Economic Zones: Progress and Priority Opportunities in Bangladesh” on the closing day of the three-day summit at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in association with the government organised the summit to showcase the country's progress and potentials to local and global investors.

The panellists focused on raising skills of people, launching a new bankruptcy act and introducing advanced technology in logistics.

Dedicated laws have to be formulated to ensure seamless power in the zones and delivery of services of the bureaucracy without any delay, emphasised ASM Mainuddin Monem, managing director of Abdul Monem Economic Zone.

“Still, I have not seen any dedicated policy for seamless power and gas supply to the economic zones. We have no choice

but to make the services seamless,” he said.

The entrepreneurs need long-term and low-cost financing to make investments. Land is also necessary for industries, so the laws should be streamlined for more public land to be leased out to economic zones, he said.

A functional one-stop service platform is also needed, he added.

The government aims to establish 100 economic zones within 2030 and approvals for 97 have already been provided of which 10 are already in

Dedicated laws have to be formulated to ensure seamless power in the zones and delivery of services of the bureaucracy without any delay, said ASM Mainuddin Monem, managing director of Abdul Monem Economic Zone

operation and 30 are under construction, according to Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza).

The investment process for economic zones is easier and there is adequate land and uninterrupted utility services, for which investors should choose those areas, said Shaikh Yusuf Harun, executive chairman of Beza.

Financial and policy incentives meant for the zones are also better, he said, adding that its OSS was offering 125 types of services under one roof, of which 50

could be availed online.

However, Suresh, an entrepreneur from India, spoke out, saying that he had failed to avail Beza's services online to set up a company. He then came over to meet associated officials and found that it would take 6 months or more to complete all formalities.

Export processing zones are ensured energy even when the rest of the country faces shortages, said Maj Gen Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, executive chairman of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza).

Similar policies should be ensured for economic zones while infrastructure and logistics improvements should focus on reducing the lead time of industries, he said.

A strong supply chain is necessary to meet the target of one trillion dollar-worth trade and in this regard, small and medium enterprises can be integrated to ensure backward linkage, he added.

The logistics industry needs to use advanced technology, said Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh.

But the local companies are not equipped to use big data, AI, cloud computing and others although the government has imposed tough conditions to prevent the entry of foreign logistics companies, he said.

The condition is that they have to have 51 per cent equity share with local businesses which is a real barrier, he added.

If port facilities do not improve, it will be really difficult for the economy to grow, said Ahmed.

Bangladesh has two outdated laws – custom act 1969 and warehousing ordinance act 1959 – that need immediate amendments. “These two acts are good enough to put us behind,” he said.

Businesses running in export processing zones are turning out to be very much successful because the entrepreneurs do not face any hassles from customs, he said.

All the businesses are facing hassles from customs but nobody is speaking out, he said, adding that customs should focus on being polite and friendly towards businesses.

He praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for taking the initiative of launching the deep-sea port of Matarbari. If a rail link can be opened from the economic zones with port linkages, it would change the country's whole scenario, he said.

The session was moderated and chaired by Hossain Khaled, managing director of the Anwar Group of Industries, while Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, former president of the FBCCI, spoke as a guest of honour.

Enamul Huque, managing director of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, Naquib Khan, founder and chief executive officer of Bangladesh Supply Chain Management Society, and Rajesh Mirchandani, chief executive officer of the Dun & Bradstreet (South Asia and Middle East), also spoke at the event.

Emirates to resume cargo flights if airports upgraded

Senior official says

RASHIDUL HASAN, Back from Dubai

Emirates SkyCargo, a concern of Emirates Group, plans to resume dedicated flights from Bangladesh if problems related to the infrastructure and facilities available at airports in Dhaka and Chattogram are resolved.

Hiran Gregory Perera, senior vice president for cargo planning and freighters of Emirates SkyCargo, recently briefed reporters about the company's intentions in this regard at its headquarters in Dubai.

Emirates had arranged a trip for aviation and tourism reporters from five media houses in Bangladesh to give them first-hand experience about the operations of its airlines, flight training academy and cargo services.

Perera said Emirates operates three passenger flights from Dhaka daily with each carrying around 100 tonnes of cargo inside the belly hold.

Highlighting their world class facilities, Emirates officials said their fleet is one of the youngest and most efficient, helping the company set new standards for performance and fuel consumption.

“In turn, our clients benefit from exceptional reliability and speed. With more than 270 wide-bodied aircraft and 12 dedicated freighters, our capacity, reach and availability set new industry benchmarks,” Perera said.

“We connect you to global supply chains with a network of more than 300 destinations spanning 80 countries across six continents, including 50 dedicated freighter locations,” he added.

Perera went on to say Emirates SkyCentral is a state-of-the-art multi-airport cargo facility in Dubai linked with a bonded truck service. Within this facility lies Emirates SkyPharma, the world's largest GDP-certified pharmaceutical cargo hub.

Perera then said Bangladeshi businesspeople could send their products to any destination in the world using facilities at the Dubai hub.

Pointing to the ongoing global economic recession following the Covid-19 pandemic, he said Bangladesh is not outside the purview of its effects.

“But the demand for air cargo will increase once the situation ends. So, Emirates will provide its cargo services from Bangladesh after that,” he added.

Highlighting the facilities of the Emirates SkyCargo village, which spans about two lakh square metres, he said a multicultural mix of over 5,300 employees are providing high quality training and reward recognition to ensure an exceptional level of service.

“Together with our partners, we can connect you to over 300 destinations globally through Emirates SkyCentral, our operations hub at Dubai International Airport and Dubai World Central,” he said.

“With a young, efficient, wide-bodied fleet, we have ample capacity to transport your cargo through our state-of-the-art, multi-airport hub in Dubai,” he added.

Perera also said that taking off from Dubai in 1985, Emirates began its passenger and cargo operations with just two aircraft travelling to Mumbai and Karachi.

However, the company's strategic location within the Middle East enabled it to quickly become the epicentre for global trade.

“30 years on with over three decades of experience under our belt, we have expanded our business to a fleet size of over 270 wide-bodied aircraft, 11 of which are dedicated freighters,” he added.



Stocks gain after two-day loss

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Major indices of the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday rose, snapping a two-day losing streak.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the country's premier bourse, added eight points, or 0.13 per cent, to reach 6,243 points by the end of the trading session.

The D330, which represents blue-chip stocks, edged up 0.08 per cent to 2,223 points while the DSES, an index comprised of shariah-compliant companies, increased 0.07 per cent to 1,359 points.

Turnover, which indicates the volume of trade, inched up 1.8 per cent to Tk 451 crore.

Of the securities traded, 95 advanced, 38 declined and 201 did not show any price movement.

Shyampur Sugar Mills made the highest gain with an increase of 9.9 per cent.

Rupali Life Insurance Company, City General Insurance, Union Capital, and Bangladesh Welding Electrodes were among the top gainers as well.

Meanwhile, Unilever Consumer Care shed the most, losing 4.9 per cent.

Bangladesh Monospool Paper Manufacturing Co, Apex Foods, Jute Spinners, and Anlima Yarn Dyeing were also on the list of significant losers.

Rupali Life Insurance Company was the most traded stock with issues worth Tk 27 crore being transacted.

Similarly, BDCOM Online, Genex Infosys, ADN Telecom, and Sea Pearl Beach Resort & Spa registered significant turnover as well.

Elsewhere, the Caspi, the all-share price index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, gained 5.3 points, or 0.02 per cent, to close at 18,400 points.



PHOTO: AFP

A worker tells people that the Silicon Valley Bank headquarters is closed on Friday in Santa Clara, California. The bank was shut down on Friday morning by California regulators and was put in control of the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. US President Joe Biden yesterday said the American people and businesses can have confidence that their bank deposits will be there when they need them.

Linde posts 28% lower profit in 2022

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Linde Bangladesh Limited reported a 28 per cent year-on-year decline in profit to Tk 88.33 crore in the financial year that ended on December 31.

The multinational gas manufacturer made a profit of Tk 122.58 crore in 2021.

Thus, the company reported earnings per share of Tk 58.04 for 2022 against Tk 80.55 a year earlier.

The net asset value per share of Linde Bangladesh rose slightly to Tk 397.44 in 2022 from Tk 395.55 in 2021. But the net operating cash flow per share dipped to Tk 37.32 from Tk 80.34 during the period.

The board of directors has recommended a 420 per cent cash dividend for 2022.

Shares of Linde Bangladesh were unchanged at Tk 1,397.70 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.