



Chicken eggs arriving on trains in Khulna from Rajshahi where they were bought for Tk 10.70 apiece. Everyday around 1 lakh eggs are traded in this manner. The photo was taken at Khulna Railway Station last week.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

# E-waste can be valuable resources if recycled effectively

Speakers tell roundtable

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

E-waste, which witnessed a rapid growth in Bangladesh posing an environmental challenge, can be turned into valuable resources through effective recycling and reprocessing methods, according to experts.

"I don't consider e-waste as waste. I think it is a resource as you get so many valuable materials in it," said Rowshan Mamtaz, a professor at the civil engineering department of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

"One of my students brought me some gold for a nose stud extracted from only a few laptops. But the challenge is that how you manage, preserve and extract it," she added.

She said select e-waste have been shipped to Japan and Singapore due to the absence of a recycling mechanism in the country.

"Besides, we need to have a collection system in place so that people don't throw e-waste into bins with other wastes. City corporations can develop a mechanism for it," she said.

This is how it can be a resource instead of piling up in landfills and posing environmental risks, she added.

She recommended setting up a plant in a high-tech park in the country so that the valuable materials can remain in Bangladesh and as well as generate employment.

Mamtaz was speaking at a roundtable titled "Bangladesh at risk due to E-waste: causes and solutions" organized by Bangladesh ICT Journalist Forum (BIJF) at the Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka.

Electronic waste or e-waste refers to discarded electronic devices such as computers, smartphones, televisions, ovens, and other electronic equipment.

She termed current recycling methods being used in the country improper and risky.

"I have seen a person dismantling an e-waste with his wounded hand without protective gear. He doesn't even know that the lead metal in the device could trigger a big health risk for him," said Mamtaz.

Improper management of electronic waste poses significant environmental risks that need to be addressed urgently, said Syed Akhter Hossain, head of the department of computer science and engineering at the Canadian University of Bangladesh.

"Currently, the annual rate of e-waste production is surging at about 30 per

cent in Bangladesh," he said.

Products which have been scrapped and are second-hand from developed countries are illegally being imported in Bangladesh and the rate of such imports is increasing, he said.

E-waste from different electronic devices contain hazardous substances such as lead, mercury, cadmium and brominated flame retardants and improper disposal has significant environmental consequences, said Hossain.

Besides, mobile phones and tablets contain precious metals like gold, silver and palladium and improper disposal leads to the loss of these valuable resources, he said.

Hossain called for strong legislation and regulations to address e-waste management.

"These laws should outline responsibilities for various stakeholders, such as producers, consumers, and waste management entities, and provide guidelines for proper collection, recycling, and disposal of e-waste," he said.

"Governments and organisations can set up collection systems to facilitate the proper disposal and recycling of e-waste. This includes designated drop-off points, collection centres, and periodic e-waste

recycling events," he added.

It is also important for people to show commitment to the environment and not throw away devices which have reached the end of their useful life with other wastes, said Md Sayed Ali, deputy secretary to the commerce ministry.

E-waste is generated from every electronic device, so awareness is needed about how it is being managed, said Atiqur Rahman, country director at Dell Technologies for Bangladesh.

There are very few opportunities for professional e-waste management in the country. Therefore, the authorities should be strict on stopping the entry of expired electronic products into the country through illegal channels, he added.

Mohammad Rezaul Karim, managing director at Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority, Koushik Jana, business development manager at HP Bangladesh, Md Mahfuzul Alam, a deputy director at Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, Naznin Nahar, president at the BIJF, and Sabbin Hasan, general secretary, were present.

Shalquat Haider, executive committee member of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Bangladesh), moderated the event.

# ICAB welcomes Tk 2,000 minimum tax

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) yesterday welcomed the budgetary proposal for registered taxpayers, who have to file their income, expenditure and wealth statements to avail 38 services, to pay a minimum tax of Tk 2,000 even if they have no taxable income.

The autonomous body thinks that it would help expand the tax net and increase the filing of returns.

The ICAB issued the statements organising a press briefing at its headquarters in Dhaka on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2023-24.

"The minimum tax is not new. It is already there," said Md Humayun Kabir, chairman of the ICAB's Taxation and Corporate Laws Committee while responding to journalists' queries.

Currently there are many individuals with bank deposits who actually pay taxes on their interest earnings from the savings, he said.

And the tax is deducted by banks while crediting the interest income to the accounts of the depositors, he said.

The depositors will be able to show the withholding tax in their tax returns, which now many do not do, he said.

Businesses should not oppose the new rule as this will increase tax net, said Kabir.

Besides, the body of professional also welcomed the Tk 761,795 crore budget despite the global and domestic challenges.

# 10th Berger Award for Excellence in Architecture underway

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The 10th Berger Award for Excellence in Architecture (BAEA) kicked off at the IAB Centre in Dhaka's Agargaon on June 1.

The six-day exhibition will remain open for visitors from 3:00pm to 9:00pm till June 6, according to a press release.

Prof Khandaker Shabbir Ahmed, president of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), and Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh, attended the opening ceremony.

Md Ali Naqi, vice chairman of national affairs at IAB, moderated a panel discussion, styled "BAEA at 20 and moving forward", which was held before the inauguration.

Khan Md Mustapha Khalid, a winner of the BAEA award, Iqbal Habib, winner, Zishan Fuad Chowdhury, winner, Naushad E Huq, juror, Nabi Nawaz Khan, general secretary of IAB, Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, chief operating officer of Berger Paints Bangladesh, and Qazi M Arif, award director, were present.

A total of 118 projects are being exhibited at the event.

Berger Paints Bangladesh initiated the BAEA in association with the IAB to recognise distinguished or notable works in the field of architecture.

# Attaining inflation target

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Once again, the budget has set an ambitious GDP growth target and there are no efforts to reduce demand through lower fiscal deficit or slowdown in the growth of domestic credit by reducing the bank financing of the budget deficit.

"Like in FY23, the proposed budget is focused on boosting growth and not macroeconomic stability," said Ahmed while making the keynote presentation at the post-budget discussion at the MCCI office in Dhaka.

According to Ahmed, Bangladesh can follow countries such as India, Thailand, the US and Vietnam as well as the nations in the European Union to find out how they secured to manage the inflationary pressure by raising the bank interest rate.

"The demand for goods will decrease if the interest rate goes up." The central bank has maintained a 9 per cent interest rate cap since April 2020, thus preventing itself from using one of the potent tools to rein in inflation, which averaged 8.64 per cent in April.

Ahmed, a former senior official of the World Bank, is opposed to the government's move to borrow Tk 1.32 lakh crore from the banking system. "If the government takes away such a big amount of money from the banking system, the private sector will face the crunch of money inflow."

He suggested the government reduce the budget deficit to 4 per cent to 4.5 per cent from 5 per cent so that the banking sector does not suffer. Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the PRI, said inflationary pressure increased also because of the depreciation of the local currency by 25 per cent against the US greenback over the last one year.

"As a result, the import tariff and prices went up at the import stage. This stoked the inflationary pressure." The cut in the rates of regulatory and customs duties as well as tariff adjustments may help reduce the inflationary pressure, he added.

Planning Minister MA Mannan said the economy is weighed down by the fallout of Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war. "But the political pressure is higher than the pressure stemming from the pandemic and the war."

He thinks the proposed budget will help the people in the rural areas greatly as the allowance for social safety nets has increased.

According to the minister, the proposed budget tried to address import substitution to help local industries thrive further.

If the supply side of commodities is not maintained properly and markets are not monitored, controlling inflation might not be possible, he warned.

"Increasing local production and allowing the import of selective goods may aid in taming higher inflation."

He said the proposal for introducing Tk 2,000 as a minimum income tax might be reviewed.

The budget has proposed the minimum tax for individuals who are required to submit income tax returns to avail various government services even if they don't have taxable incomes.

Kamran T Rahman, senior vice-president of the MCCI, said automation of the tax system and the reduction of system loss in tax collection are needed as part of policy reforms.

"There should also be an interim evaluation of the budget after three months." The budget deficit has been set at Tk 2.62 lakh crore for FY24, which is 5.2 per cent of the GDP.

"We think this deficit is likely to increase because of the proposed tax conditions by the International Monetary Fund," Rahman said. "We think the inflation target may be hard to reach."

Adeeb H Khan, a director of the MCCI, said the new Income Tax law, 2023 is expected to be presented in parliament and requested the government to allow sufficient time to stakeholders so that they can examine it properly and give feedback.

# Some respite

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unless the price of raw materials goes up in the international market. This means local companies will be able to sell cancer medicines at reasonable prices," Islam noted.

He thanked the government for its continued support aimed at developing the pharmaceuticals industry.

"As a result, manufacturers will be able to continuously improve the quality of medicines. At the same time, cancer drugs produced in Bangladesh can be priced competitively for the export market. So, the policy support will boost export earnings as well."

Monjurul Alam, director for global business development of Beacon Pharmaceuticals Limited, the pioneer in manufacturing oncology drugs in the country, said: "Our patients are so fortunate that they are getting all the latest drugs at affordable prices."

According to him, the government has withdrawn the import tax on raw materials needed to produce diabetic drugs to make the products easily accessible.

Local cancer drug sales amounted to about Tk 800 crore last year and the demand is growing by 15 per cent on average annually, industry people say.

Alam thinks patients suffering from kidney and heart diseases should also get the access to medicines at lower prices.

Pharmaceutical companies such as Beacon, Eskayef, Renata, Incepta, Healthcare, and Techno Pharma manufacture more than 110 types of oncology drugs, meeting 80 per cent of the local demand. It was around 50 per cent in 2015.

The rising local production means a lower import of lifesaving medications, cuts import reliance, keeps the supply chain smooth, and avoids price fluctuations to a large extent.

Although local companies manufacture 99 per cent of the oncology drugs consumed by patients, some people still prefer imported drugs, according to a manufacturer.

Beginning in 2015, oncology products are exported to at least 140 countries.

# China's yuan may slip further to aid economic recovery

REUTERS, Shanghai/Singapore

China's yuan has skidded to six-month lows against the dollar and analysts say it could weaken further as investors fret over a bumpy pandemic recovery in the world's second-largest economy.

Disappointing economic data, widening yield differentials with the United States, upcoming corporate dividend payments and continued capital outflows through foreign selling of stocks and bonds have combined to drag the currency down to levels last seen in November.

The yuan has depreciated more than 5 per cent against the surging dollar since the highs hit in January, when global markets embraced China's border reopening, and is one of the worst performing Asian currencies this year. It last traded at 7.0585 per dollar on Friday.

"The yuan suffers as China's

reopening story is less appealing than before, and there is no sign of further stimulus," said Gary Ng, senior economist for Asia Pacific at Natixis.

"A weaker currency at the current juncture can help export performance, especially as global trade is shrinking this year."

Exports have been one of the few bright spots for the Chinese economy over the past few years but new orders have been falling in recent months amid softening global demand.

Sources told Reuters that the commerce ministry has asked exporters, importers and banks recently about their currency strategies and how a weakening yuan could affect their businesses.

To be sure, the central bank has ample policy tools to prevent excess currency movements. The People's Bank of China (PBOC) said last month that it will resolutely curb

large fluctuations in the exchange rate and study the strengthening of self-regulation of dollar deposits.

"Expectations of financial institutions, enterprises and residents on the exchange rate are generally stable, which is a solid foundation and strong guarantee for the smooth operation of the foreign exchange market," the central bank said in the statement.

However, despite the yuan's quickening tumble over the past month, traders have only reported a few occasions when state banks have been suspected of stepping in to support the currency.

The PBOC did not immediately respond to Reuters request for comments.

"The PBOC essentially appears content to let the rising US dollar buoy USD/CNY higher, amid China's fading growth momentum," said Alvin Tan, head of Asia FX strategy at RBC Capital Markets.

# FBCCI calls for smooth energy

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low importance, he said.

The government proposed an allocation of Tk 34,819 crore for the energy sector in the national budget for fiscal year 2023-24.

"I know that businesspeople feel the major pain from the energy sector because severe power outages come with huge costs for them," said Jashim.

Apart from the energy sector, the government should give more focus on skills development, he said.

His comments came at a press briefing the FBCCI organised on its premises in Dhaka yesterday to convey its reaction on the proposed national budget for fiscal year 2023-24.

Mostofa Azad Chowdhury Babu,

senior vice president of the FBCCI, and Sameer Sattar, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), were also present.

The FBCCI also demanded withdrawing all types of advance income tax and advance tax on imports as the refunding system of the tax was very complex and it increased the costs of business.

About the challenges in implementation of the proposed budget, Jashim, reading out from a written statement, spoke of taming inflationary pressure, improving balance of payments, stabilising the foreign exchange rate, raising foreign exchange reserves, getting crude oil and ensuring energy supplies.

A journalist asked how much of

the crowding out effect the private sector would face if the government borrowed a huge amount from the banking sector.

The FBCCI president said import of raw material was plunging along with capital machineries and if this continued, the private sector would not need credit in the upcoming year.

From July 2022 to April 2023, opening and settlement of letters of credit (LCs) for importing raw materials dropped by around 32 per cent and 9.5 per cent respectively, according to Bangladesh Bank.

In the same period, opening and settlement of LCs for importing capital machinery fell by around 57 per cent and 17 per cent respectively, the data showed.