



A worker is seen using rice as feed to fatten fish at an enclosure in Abhaynagar upazila of Jashore. About 150 kilogrammes of rice is needed for this purpose each day and distributed by small boats all over the 200 bigha enclosure. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Small farmers going thru hardship: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Small and marginal farmers are increasingly finding it difficult to sustain their livelihoods based on prevailing crop practices, marketing channels and value chains, said experts yesterday.

These concerns were voiced during an event on citizen's agenda for inclusive development and fairness organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Four papers are presented at the event organised at Brac Centre Inn in the capital on four different crucial issues to capture the views of the country's left-behind stakeholders.

Jinnat Ara, a research fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, presented a paper on transforming agriculture for an inclusive and diversified economy.

She said the government has taken initiatives toward agricultural transformation including installing solar-powered irrigation pumps, establishing agriculture information centres and distributing agriculture assistance cards for subsidies.

"In spite of these initiatives, backward and forward linkages between agriculture

and industry have remained weak," said Ara.

She said the main challenges that agricultural transformation was facing were a labour shortage, land fragmentation, access to resources, climate change and environmental degradation, weak water management, lack of skilled labour, etc.

A lack of appropriate government policy and limited research and development are also key barriers, she said.

Unplanned urbanisation has reduced the quality of life of city dwellers as global indicators rank Bangladeshi cities as the least liveable ones, said Shanavez Hossain, an assistant professor at Independent University, Bangladesh.

He was presenting a paper on providing public utilities and services against the backdrop of unplanned urbanisation.

Despite substantial investments, urban development initiatives face critical setbacks as the standard of living remains dismally low, exacerbated by a lack of coordination among organisations, experts said during a discussion on the topic.

Vulnerable backward communities are at risk, and youths grapple with an acute

shortage of skills and decent employment opportunities, they said.

It is often heard that Dhaka is one of the most polluted cities in the world. But the government has spent about Tk 1,35,000 crore for the development of Dhaka in the last decade, said Hossain.

This means that there is a difference between policy implementation and money allocation, he said.

In spite of various initiatives, backward and forward linkages between agriculture and industry have remained weak, said an expert.

He also said e-waste was growing at the rate of 20 percent every year in the city and a large portion of solid waste was not collected.

According to him, this dire condition of cities was due to a lack of good governance, coordination and information policy.

The city's service providers should be strengthened. More than 30 organisations are involved in traffic management in Dhaka. But none of the organisations know what the others are doing, he added.

In order to develop urban services,

laws should be updated and made people-friendly, people should be given correct information and examples of different countries should be taken into consideration, he recommends.

In most of the cases, the discussion on recent economic advancement in Bangladesh remains limited to "average development", said Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of the citizen's platform.

"But behind this average there are various types of errors or inequities. People who fall behind or are held back do not develop as much as they should with this average as their vulnerability remains," he said.

There is another factor in moving from a lower-middle-income country to an upper-middle-income country, which is the middle-income trap, said Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

To save Bangladesh from this middle-income trap, production-based diversification should be brought into the economy, he said.

He also said Bangladesh was now in the process of a democratic transition. He hoped that there would be a fair, competitive, participatory and transparent election in Bangladesh.

ICC to assist FBCCI in dispute resolution

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) will assist the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in the case of arbitration for dispute resolution.

ICC Chair Maria Fernanda Garza said the International Chamber will facilitate training programmes on arbitration for the FBCCI.

She expressed her willingness when FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam sought ICC's assistance in the field, during a meeting at the FBCCI office in Dhaka on October 16.

Alam lauded ICC's arbitration services and showed interest for signing a memorandum of understanding with the ICC to enhance FBCCI's capacity for dispute prevention and resolution.

He also sought ICC's cooperation in drafting proposals for free trade agreements and preferential trade agreements on dumping and anti-dumping issues.

The ICC chair informed the apex trade body of Bangladesh about the ICC Centenary Declaration on Dispute Prevention and Settlement.

She also praised the economic development Bangladesh has achieved and emphasised the importance of technology, cybersecurity and cross-border commerce.

ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman and Vice President Mir Nasir Hossain, FBCCI Vice Presidents Khairul Huda Chopol, Mohammad Anwar Sadat Sarker and Md Munir Hossain were also present.

Oil price surges 2%

REUTERS, London

Oil prices surged nearly 2 percent on Wednesday as tension escalated in the Middle East after hundreds were killed in a blast at a Gaza hospital, sparking concerns about potential oil supply disruptions from the region.

Brent crude futures was up \$1.55, or 1.7 percent, to \$91.45 a barrel at 0810 GMT. West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) futures were up \$1.66, or 1.9 percent, at \$88.32 a barrel.

Both benchmarks gained more than \$2 to touch their highest levels in two weeks earlier in the session.

Markets factored in risk premiums after hundreds of Palestinians were killed in a blast at a Gaza City hospital on Tuesday that Israeli and Palestinian officials blamed on each other.

Jordan then cancelled a summit it was to host with US President Joe Biden and Egyptian and Palestinian leaders. Biden arrived in Israel on Wednesday, beginning a visit to consult on the spiralling Gaza war.

"This turn of diplomatic fortunes again garners fear of conflict spread and therefore the leap in oil," said John Evans of oil broker PVM.

"A long occupation looms as the scenario that pushes Brent oil futures above \$US100/bbl because it raises the risk that the Israel Hamas conflict expands and potentially draws in Iran directly," added Vivek Dhar, an analyst at Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

Abdul Monem to improve Jhenaidah-Jashore highway

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Construction company Abdul Monem Ltd has signed an agreement with the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) over a "WeCARE Phase-1: Jhenaidah-Jashore Highway (N-7) Improvement Project".

ASM Mainuddin Monem, the company's managing director, and Syed Moinul Hasan, chief engineer of the RHD, signed the deal at the latter's office in Tejgaon, said a press release.



ASM Mainuddin Monem, managing director of Abdul Monem Ltd, and Syed Moinul Hasan, chief engineer of the Roads and Highways Department, pose for photographs after signing an agreement for the "WeCARE Phase-1: Jhenaidah-Jashore Highway (N-7) Improvement Project" at the latter's office in Tejgaon recently.

PHOTO: ABDUL MONEM

Market-driven exchange rate

FROM PAGE B1

There is a pressure on the liquidity in the banking sector but the CEO of Brac Bank calls it normal.

BB Executive Director and Spokesperson Md Mezbaul Haque said the governor asked banks to bring in remittance at the BAFEDA-fixed rate.

The bankers also said the payments against exports are being deferred by foreign buyers. As a result, a portion

of earnings are not being transferred to the country, he said.

"Banks are clearing the import bills immediately whereas export proceeds are being delayed, which has resulted in the forex crisis."

According to Haque, there has been higher export growth this year but proceed realisation has fallen in proportion to the shipment.

"There is a gap between the export figures of the Export Promotion

Bureau and the real proceeds."

A section of exporters doesn't want to cash in their forex incomes immediately in order to benefit from the downward trend of the taka rate, according to experts.

In 2022-23, products worth more than \$55 billion were shipped from Bangladesh, but around \$46 billion came to the country, Haque pointed out.

"We instructed banks to reduce the gap."

Concerns rise as India extends ban

FROM PAGE B1

Locally, sugar prices climbed and hit a record high of Tk 140 in May this year due to rising global prices and a sharp devaluation of the taka against the US dollar.

Yesterday, the retail sugar price was between Tk 130-Tk 135 per kg in Dhaka's markets. That price was 43 percent higher than a year ago, market prices data by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh showed.

October-March is crushing season in India while sugar from Brazil arrives later in the year.

Taslim Shahriar, deputy general manager at Meghna Group of Industries (MGI), said an export ban by India had been in place for some time and that the global sugar market remained very volatile.

Sugar is being traded at record-high prices and India's extension of the export ban is not good news, he said.

"If prices rise in the world market due to the ban, it is likely to affect us," said Shahriar. "Global prices will drop if India withdraws the ban."

Abul Hashem, former vice-president of Bangladesh Sugar Merchant Association, said sugar

prices remained steady at wholesale markets yesterday. There has been no effect on the market so far, he said.

India's sugar export restrictions have been in place for the past two years, he said. During this time, India allocated export quotas to mills, according to Reuters.

Under the restrictions, an exporter requires a licence from the government to export sugar.

In the last season that ended on September 30, India allowed mills to export only 62 lakh tonnes of sugar. They were permitted to sell a record 1.11 crore tonnes of sugar in 2021-22, Reuters reported.

"The export restriction was expected. Instead of the usual one-year limit, this time the government has imposed an indefinite export restriction," a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house told Reuters.

"It is unlikely to allocate export quotas this year, as its goal is to reduce prices before the elections."

Five Indian states will elect new state legislative assemblies next month, beginning the process of regional polls ahead of national elections next year.

NBR plans Tk 532cr

FROM PAGE B1

Morshed, a joint commissioner of the NBR and the focal point officer of the project.

The six buildings will host a total of 86 offices and will help accelerate the automation process, he said.

The NBR has proposed Tk 283.68 crore for the construction of office infrastructure and substations across 58,932 square metres.

Almost 25 percent of the total cost relates to external electrification, according to documents.

It also proposed Tk 2 crore for the purchase of three inspection vehicles, including a jeep, microbus and a double cabin pickup, for its project director and PWD.

The NBR plans to spend Tk 22.76 crore to purchase furniture and Tk 14.20 crore for water supply and sanitation work.

The planning commission recently held a review meeting about the project.

A team from the planning commission has also visited the places and given some observations to the NBR, said a planning commission official, seeking anonymity.

In the feasibility study for the proposed project, five of the project areas, bar Noakhali, were identified as areas prone to waterlogging. Besides, Sylhet is an earthquake-prone region.

As such, the review meeting raised questions about the rationale of selecting areas prone to waterlogging and earthquakes.

The NBR has proposed the construction of 5-10-storey tax offices and dormitories in Barishal, Sylhet and Rangpur and 3-7-storey buildings in Dinajpur, Brahmanbaria and Noakhali.

The review committee also made observations on the need of such multi-storey buildings at divisional and district levels.

Nations should

FROM PAGE B4

lauded alongside improvement in infrastructure and education and progress made in terms of the child mortality rate and life expectancy.

Bangladesh should conduct more business through digital platforms to remove trade barriers and for more efficient management of businesses.

The ICC, established in 1919 and headquartered in Paris, also wants more multilateral trade.

The ICC has also been playing a vital role globally in settling disputes under its Alternative

Dispute Resolution (ADR), which was established in 1923. Two years ago, an expedited process was launched for speedy resolution of dispute under the ADR.

The world is still suffering from the fallout of the pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war. Bangladesh's economy is on the right path, but global issues have unfortunately been affecting not only Bangladesh but creating similar situations all over the world, she said.

She added that the situation in the Middle East would affect almost all countries.