



Country must be back in business without delay

Bankers, factory owners and telco CEOs suggest a way forward for the economy as they join a roundtable organised by *Star*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid worker unrest and insecurity in the industrial sector, entrepreneurs and bankers have urged the new administration to focus on rebuilding confidence in the economy.

Businesses suffered heavily because of street protests and internet blackouts with production disrupted and shipments delayed during the anti-discrimination student movement that toppled the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5.

The political turmoil in Bangladesh has significantly impacted the economy, eroding the confidence of both domestic and international investors. The police force, fearing reprisal attacks, was hesitant to return to work, further worsening the situation. Worker unrest fuelled more concerns later.

Now, Bangladesh must make sure that the country is back in business and also needs to set a communication strategy for channelling the information to the domestic and international business community, according to Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear Ltd.

Nasim Manzur and other entrepreneurs and bankers shared their ideas about short and long-term measures at a roundtable titled Current Business Challenges & Way Forward, organised by The Daily Star at its office in Dhaka yesterday.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, moderated the discussion.

SECURITY AND UNREST

Speaking at the roundtable, Sk Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group, said the elephant in the room is the law and order situation. "Of course, I was personally almost assaulted in one of my factories," he said.

Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh, described the "huge labour unrest" as "a dire problem" for the manufacturers.

With the police absent, the entrepreneurs are turning to the army but confusion remains over whom to talk to to resolve the issues raised by the workers, she said.

"So ultimately, they [entrepreneurs] do not know who to contact and how to run the factory. This is going to give a certain amount of uncertainty for the multinational companies who are actually investors. They are seeing that this kind of labour unrest happens and there is nobody to support them," Rupali said.

REGAINING CONFIDENCE

Normalcy appears to be returning slowly to the industrial sector now with the workers and law enforcers getting back

to their jobs, while army personnel have joined the efforts to ensure safety in the industrial belts.

Nasim Manzur suggested ensuring safety in the five major industrial belts, including Ashulia, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Chattogram and Cumilla so that no further untoward incidents take place in these industrial zones.

He mentioned that several factories were burnt out or vandalised, which impacted the production and business of these industries heavily as a section of people took advantage of the volatility.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Rebuild business confidence
- Beef up security in 5 major industrial belts
- Restore law and order as soon as possible
- Rebuild trust in banking sector thru reforms
- Increase cash flow in banking channels
- Focus on ease of doing business
- More trade facilitation for better business
- Equal disbursement of Export Development Fund
- Make BIDA dynamic

For instance, production in nearly 20 pharmaceuticals factories has been severely affected due to the latest spell of labour unrest and a tyre factory, which used to meet nearly 60 percent of the domestic demand, was torched in Narayanganj, he said.

The government should hold a meeting involving at least 50 of the top foreign investors soon so they regain confidence in doing business here, said Nasim Manzur.

"I would like to recommend setting up a taskforce which would include major exporters, government, as well as some of our international partners, investors, buyers, as to what that communication

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IPDC Finance PLC officials, the five winners of The Daily Star-IPDC Unsung Women Nation Builders Award-2023, and five female coordinators of the Anti-discrimination Student Movement pose for a photo at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium yesterday evening. PHOTO: STAR

Hats off to grassroots women torchbearers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five grassroots women were honoured at the seventh edition of the Unsung Women Nation Builders Award-2023 yesterday evening for their resilience and dedication that empowered themselves and brought about meaningful changes in society.

Between 2017 and last year, the award, a joint initiative by The Daily Star and IPDC Finance PLC, recognised 42 grassroots women for their tireless and often unnoticed contributions to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

This year the awardees, each symbolising courage and strength in their respective fields, received their well-deserved recognition at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium.

The award recipients are Suraya Farhana Resma, an agricultural entrepreneur from Bogura; Hlakrayprue Kheyang, a dedicated advocate for Khyang women from Bandarban and Rangamati; Nacima Akter from Jashore, known for her environment-friendly pens; Alpona Rani Mistry from Satkhira, who preserves

indigenous seeds; and Titu Paul, a trailblazer in artificial insemination for livestock farming.

IPDC Finance PLC Managing Director Rizwan Dawood Shams in his speech said, "In 2017, The Daily Star and IPDC began this journey to put the spotlight on indomitable women whose stories resemble novels. Their struggles, courage, and efforts to help others should be publicised. Positive stories like these are key to progress."

At the event, Rizwan asked for a one-minute silence in memory of Jannatul Ferdous Mohua, a fellow awardee with a physical disability who passed away.

Despite her disability, Mohua completed her education, got trained in embroidery, and pursued e-commerce. She left behind an inspiring story.

In his welcome speech, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam highlighted the importance of recognising women whose crucial role in shaping the nation, within a male-dominated society, often goes unnoticed.

"Through this unsung women nation builders programme, we

honour grassroots women with no formal education. We are delighted, proud, and inspired by their social awareness, patriotism, self-belief, and stories of overcoming immense struggles," he said.



Mahfuz praised the resilience of the women, who advanced in most cases with their willpower and without any support from banks or social institutions.

"We are truly honoured to recognise such women," he added.

Resma rebuilt her life after ending her marriage. She was

abused in her married life.

She started with a small fish farm, and then expanded her businesses to vermicomposting and cattle, poultry, and vegetable farming.

Despite limited financial resources and no formal education, her ventures achieved remarkable success due to her sheer determination and relentless hard work.

Today, her monthly earnings exceed Tk 2 lakh, with total assets valued at Tk 2 crore. She also became a source of inspiration and hope. She trains and employs people at her farms.

Other award winners, like Resma, have significantly improved the lives of women in their communities.

Hlakrayprue Kheyang emerged as a flag bearer for the disadvantaged Khyang women in Rangamati and Bandarban by creating employment opportunities and helping them become self-dependent. Those women now support their families and fund their siblings' education.

As the former chairperson and current adviser to the Gunguru

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BUSINESS

Workers' unrest affects RMG production

More than 80 factories in the Ashulia-Gazipur industrial belt remained shut yesterday as workers demonstrated to realise several demands.

Around 69 of the affected factories are owned by members of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), according to data from the trade body.

Workers of Euphoria Apparels in the Jamgora area of Savar vandalised the factory around 6:00pm. They also set fire to a vehicle belonging to the Rab and vandalised an army vehicle.

STORY ON B4

39 more DCs likely to be withdrawn within a day or two

New ones may be appointed a day after withdrawal; 25 districts get new DCs

BAHARAM KHAN

The interim government is likely to withdraw 39 more deputy commissioners within a day or two.

It will appoint new DCs to the districts a day after the withdrawal, said sources of the Cabinet Division and the public administration ministry.

The decision has been made to expedite the field-level administration activities that became slow after the fall of Awami League government on August 5, they said.

Meanwhile, the public administration ministry yesterday appointed 25 DCs

in the districts from where DCs were withdrawn on August 20. It issued a gazette notification to this effect.

The DCs are the head of civil administration in the districts. They play a vital role in overseeing local

governance, ensuring the effective delivery of public services, and maintaining law and order.

"The government will issue a notification of appointment of the new DCs in these districts a day after their withdrawal," said an official seeking

anonymity. The ministry officials mentioned that DCs from all 64 districts had never been changed within such a short time.

There was some hesitation within the government about withdrawing all DCs. Some argued that there are many capable officers currently serving and that it might not be right to replace them. On the other hand, those who have felt overlooked for a long time are pushing for the withdrawals.

A DC said after the withdrawal of 25 DCs, many of them anticipated that all

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Power outages on the rise again

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Power cuts are getting more frequent as power generation has failed to keep up with the high demand caused by the rising mercury.

For instance, the power generation shortfall hit nearly 2,000 megawatts (MW) yesterday -- the highest in recent weeks, according to data from the Bangladesh Power Development Board.

From this month, PDB has started

generating up to 13,900 MW of electricity a day against the highest demand of 16,200MW, which is much higher than the previous month's average. Last month, the demand was 14,000MW to 14,500MW.

The temperature in Dhaka is now in the mid-30s during the day.

Rajshahi, Rangpur, Cumilla, Mymensingh and Sylhet areas are mostly affected by power cuts, the PDB data shows.

Frequent power cuts started in

the last three to four days, said Rafiul Islam, a resident of the Sambhuganj area of Mymensingh.

"It's unbearable amid the sweltering heat."

The situation stays normal from midnight to 7 in the morning and then the power goes out in one to two-hour intervals throughout the day, Rafiul said.

A businessman, who ran a steel workshop in Biswas Para of

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