

Sergel nearing Tk 1,000cr annual sales

AHSAN HABIB

Sergel is heading towards generating Tk 1,000 crore in annual sales as over Tk 900 crore worth of the gastrological medicine was sold in the first nine months of this year, according to information technology company IMS Health.

This is one of the largest selling products in the country. Md Halimuzzaman, CEO of Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Ltd, said he was proud of this single brand of the company reaching such high sales, although it had not reached Tk 1,000 crore yet.

Since the customer base is high, the sales growth now appears low compared to previous years but there is potential for further growth, he said.

Top selling drugs	
In Jan-Sep; SOURCE: IMS HEALTH	
Sergel	Tk 918cr
Maxpro	Tk 486cr
Pantonix	Tk 376cr
Napa	Tk 338cr
Cef-3	Tk 274cr

The second and third-highest selling medicine brands are also from the same gastrological generic. Sales of Maxpro and Pantonix have reached Tk 486 crore and Tk 376 crore respectively.

In the pharmaceuticals market, the market share of gastrologic products is the highest and Sergel has earned the highest market share over the years for its acceptance among doctors and patients, said Halimuzzaman.

Among the 10 top-selling drug brands, five are gastrological medicines.

Sergel holds a 2.67 percent market share, with sales worth Tk 918 crore in the nine-month period.

Maxpro holds a 1.41 percent market share and the market share of Pantonix is 1.10 percent, the data showed.

Apart from Sergel, some other brands have become popular over the years, said Halimuzzaman.

The fourth-highest selling drug in the nine months period was Napa, with sales reaching Tk 338 crore.

Sales of Cef-3, Monas, Exium, Seclo and Bizoran are also above Tk 200 crore.

Almost all the drug companies have their own brands of these drugs, which bear the

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STOCKS		
	DSEX ▲	CASPI ▲
	0.39%	0.25%
	5,204.97	14,471.60

COMMODITIES			AS OF FRIDAY
	Gold ▼	Oil ▲	
	\$2,622.18	\$70.27	
	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	

ASIAN MARKETS				FRIDAY CLOSINGS
	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
	▲ 0.29%	▲ 1.80%	▲ 0.27%	▲ 0.06%
	78,699.07	40,281.16	3,771.63	3,400.14

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

For the local apparel industry, 2024 was a year marked by challenges, recoveries and a renewed sense of hope as the global market began to brighten – proving once again the resilience of Bangladesh's apparel night.

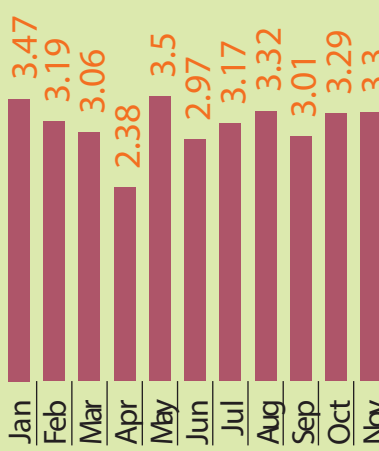
Energy crises, dollar shortages, supply chain disruptions, labour unrest centring pay hikes, political uncertainty and a slack law and order situation: the list of domestic challenges for apparel-makers in 2024 was extensive.

In a positive development, Western buyers began returning to Bangladesh following the fierce nationwide movement and political changeover, as inflationary pressures eased and the world recovered from the pandemic and war fallout.

Consequently, Bangladesh's apparel shipments to major export markets like the EU and the USA rebounded. In the July-November period, the country's

GARMENTEXPORTS SO FAR THIS YEAR

(In billion \$)
SOURCES: EPB AND BGMEA



shipments grew by 16.25 percent year-over-year to \$16.11 billion.

"This indicates that the future is brighter now than a few months ago,"

TAKEAWAYS FROM 2024

Exports

Garment export was rebounding gradually | Garment sales were picking up in EU and USA as inflation eased | Russia-Ukraine war continued to take toll on global garment supply chain

Labour law

Govt decided to amend labour law by March next year

Wage and other demands

- Govt, union leaders and owners agreed to 18-point demand of workers
- Increment by 9% came into effect from December

Disruption

- RMG production and shipment were affected by July movement
- Labour unrest in industrial areas exacerbated the situation
- Unrest-affected areas: Gazipur, Ashulia, Savar, Zirabo and Zirani

said MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group, whose top clients include Walmart-George, Puma, Esprit, and G-Star.

"I can see a very positive outlook for garment exports," Jabbar added.

The local apparel industry, which fetches the lion's share of the country's

Foreign fund flow, new pledges dwindle as debt servicing surges

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Bangladesh's foreign debt servicing surged 28 percent year-on-year in the first five months of fiscal year 2024-25 owing to the country's expanded foreign loan portfolio and a rise in global interest rates.

In the same period, foreign loan disbursement fell by 27 percent year-on-year while commitments for new loans dropped by 91 percent, according to data released by the finance ministry yesterday.

With the obligations mounting and foreign funds diminishing, economists called for rejuvenating development spending as they argue this would streamline the foreign loan pipeline.

During the July-November period of FY25, the country returned \$1.71 billion in principal and interest payments on foreign loans, up from \$1.33 billion during the same period of FY24, according to finance ministry data.

According to the breakdown, the value of principal payments climbed by 37 percent to \$1.05 billion while interest payments rose by 17 percent to \$655 million.

Adding to the fiscal pressures, foreign assistance commitments have fallen precipitously.

With the obligations mounting and foreign funds diminishing, economists called for rejuvenating development spending as they argue this would streamline the foreign loan pipeline

In the first five months of FY25, total commitments for grants and loans stood at just \$522.68 million – a sharp drop from \$5.86 billion in the previous year.

Loan commitments fell from \$5.57 billion to \$248.88 million while grant commitments remained relatively flat.

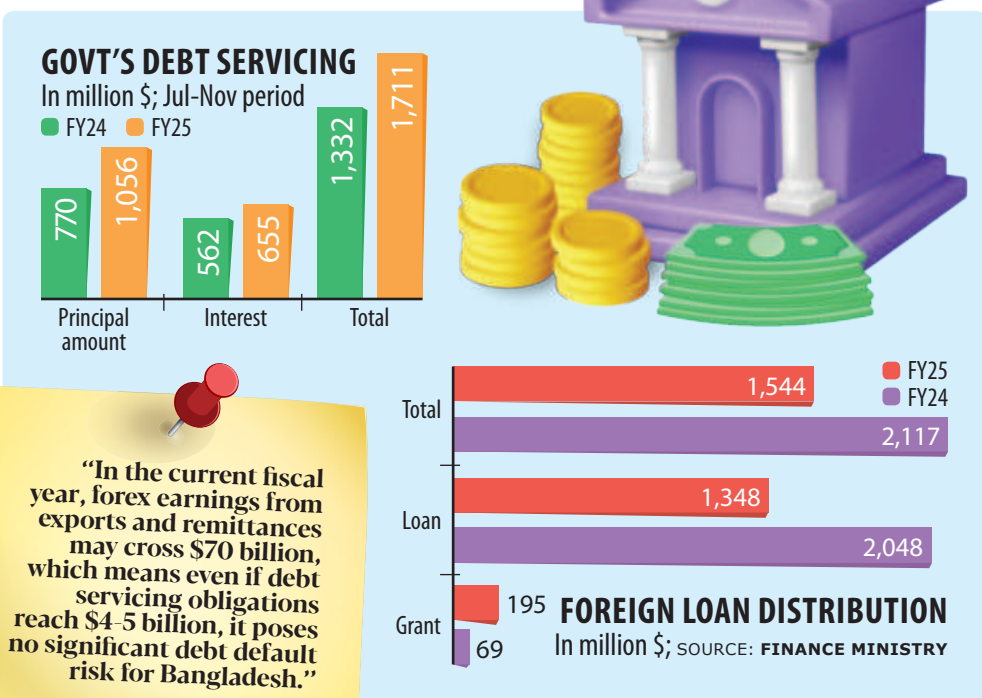
Disbursements also declined in the July-November period, with total project-related disbursements amounting to \$1.54 billion, down from \$2.11 billion during the same period last year.

This decrease reflects a slowdown in project loan inflows at a time when Bangladesh relies heavily on external financing for infrastructure and development initiatives.

The combination of rising debt obligations and declining foreign assistance is presenting a huge challenge for Bangladesh's fiscal management.

To cushion the increasing burden, economists suggested that the government should set priorities for annual development programme (ADP) implementation, stabilise the exchange rate and enhance domestic revenue mobilisation.

"The debt-servicing cost was supposed to surge as we have already seen the uptrend in



couple of years,"

the last said MA Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), a local think-tank.

Razzaque said higher interest rates and shorter grace and maturity periods for foreign loans are contributing to the debt burden.

However, the fall in foreign loan disbursement is a matter of fresh concern, he said.

"A lower government expenditure,

In a recent report, titled "Medium-Term Macroeconomic Policy Statement (MTMPS)", the finance ministry said interest payments would continue to rise gradually in the coming years.

The proportion of external interest payments as a percentage of the national budget will rise to 2.6 percent in FY27 from 0.9 percent in FY22, reflecting the growing impact of external debt, the report said.

However, Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute (PRI) of Bangladesh, does not believe the debt servicing would pose any risk for the country.

"Despite the rise in debt servicing, it does not pose any major risk even in absence of new loan commitments as exports and remittances offer a reasonable cushion that can help the treasury meet its immediate international debt obligations," he told The Daily Star.

"In the current fiscal year, foreign exchange earnings from exports and remittances are likely to cross \$70 billion, which means even if debt obligations reach \$4-5 billion, it poses no significant default risk for Bangladesh."

Nonetheless, given the local currency Taka is likely to further lose its value against the US dollar, the domestic fiscal burden of additional international debt servicing is going to intensify, he said.

"It necessitates that the Ministry of Finance keeps committing to streamlining domestic resource mobilisation initiatives that can offer the treasury more fiscal space to manage this additional pressure," Rahman added.

However, domestic revenue mobilisation does not offer much hope.

During the July-November period of FY25, revenue collection logged nearly a 2.5 percent negative growth year-on-year, according to national revenue board sources.

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Financial services sector yet to reach full potential

Governor says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The financial services sector of Bangladesh is yet to reach its full potential despite the significant advancements seen so far, according to Ahsan H Mansur, governor of the Bangladesh Bank.

"There is no single entity behind this failure. Maybe we could have worked with more dedication. Maybe there was a deviation. But nonetheless, we should self-analyse our failures," he said.

"There is no single entity behind this failure. Maybe we could have worked with more dedication. Maybe there was a deviation."

Mansur was speaking as chief guest at the golden jubilee of the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) in the Mirpur area of Dhaka yesterday.

The event, presided over by BIBM Director General Md Akhtaruzzaman, opened with a discussion on the challenges and potential for financial services in the country.

The inaugural session was moderated by Shah Md Ahsan Habib, a professor at the BIBM.

Mansur said no institution can stand alone and must cooperate with others in order to succeed, with the same being applicable for financial service providers.

He also said the financial services sector is by no means small, as subsets like the banking industry are a major part of it.

Against this backdrop, he warned that the

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Can apparel industry weather any storm? 2024 offers clues

Bank Asia celebrates 16 years of its Islamic banking services

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia PLC has celebrated the 16th anniversary of its "Islamic Banking Services".

The bank organised a discussion meeting and other programmes marking the occasion at Bank Asia Tower in the capital's Karwan Bazar recently, the bank said in a press release.

Mawlana Shah Mohammad Wali Ullah, member secretary of the Shariah Supervisory Committee of the bank, was the keynote speaker of the session, where he highlighted the importance of Islamic banking and the unique features of Bank Asia Islamic Banking Services.

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director of the bank, Shafiuzzaman and ANM Mahfuz, additional managing directors, and SM Iqbal Hossain, deputy managing director, attended the programme.

Bank Asia has been operating its "Islamic Banking Services" since December 24, 2008.

With utmost importance given to Shariah law, Bank Asia Islamic Banking has been providing necessary banking services, including deposit collection and investment, for all categories of customers.

Other deputy managing directors and department/divisional heads along with executives and officials of the bank were also present.



PHOTO: BANK ASIA

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director of Bank Asia, attends a discussion organised by the bank to celebrate 16 years of its Islamic banking services at Bank Asia Tower in the capital's Karwan Bazar recently.

ACI declares 35% dividends



M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of Advanced Chemical Industries Limited, presides over the company's 51st annual general meeting, which was held virtually yesterday. The meeting announced 35 percent dividends, including a 20 percent cash dividend, for 2024.

PHOTO: ACI

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI) Limited has announced 35 percent dividends, including a 20 percent cash dividend, for the year that ended on June 30, 2024.

The announcement came at the company's 51st annual general meeting (AGM), which was held virtually yesterday, ACI said in a press release.

M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of the company, presided over the meeting.

Arif Dowla, managing director of the company, highlighted a few of the salient features of the business and addressed issues raised by shareholders.

He expressed gratitude and acknowledged the cooperation of all stakeholders.

He particularly acknowledged the contribution and efforts of employees of the company and thanked them all.

The audited financial statements together with reports of the directors and auditors of the company were approved by the shareowners in the meeting.

MGI brands win 9 awards at 16th Best Brand Awards

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Fresh, the flagship brand of Meghna Group of Industries (MGI), has won an impressive nine awards across various categories at the 16th Best Brand Awards at the InterContinental Dhaka in the capital's Shahbag recently.

Of the awards, Fresh claimed three awards for emerging as a standout performer in three key categories. The categories are Fresh Atta-Maida-Suji, Fresh Refined Sugar and Super Fresh Drinking Water, said a press release.

In addition, Super Fresh Soybean Oil, Fresh Full Cream Milk Powder, Fresh Premium Salt and Fresh Tissue were recognised as the second most loved brands in their particular categories. And, Fresh Spices achieved third place in the spice category.

MGI expressed heartfelt gratitude to its distributors, consumers, channel partners and well-wishers for their continued trust and support, the press release added.

This year's awards recognised excellence across 44 distinct categories, alongside honouring the "Overall Top 15 Most Loved Brands of Bangladesh".

A total of 60 awards were presented during the event, which was organised by Bangladesh Brand Forum, in partnership with nSearch Limited, and supported by The Daily Star.

To ensure fair and comprehensive results, nSearch conducted an extensive survey involving 11,200 respondents from urban and rural areas across all eight divisions of the country. The survey maintained an equal gender ratio, offering valuable insights into consumer preference.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (DEC 29, 2024)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 70-Tk 80	1.35 ↑	11.11 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 55	0	7.14 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0	-10.53 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0	0
Soybean (litre)	Tk 163-Tk 165	-1.50 ↓	4.13 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 70	-22.58 ↓	-4.00 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 75	-48.98 ↓	-34.21 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 46-Tk 50	1.05 ↑	9.09 ↑
SOURCE: TCB			

Dollar hits 5-month high against yen

REUTERS, New York


The US dollar hit a five-month high against the Japanese yen on Thursday on expectations the greenback would be boosted next year by policies by the incoming Donald Trump administration that are expected to boost growth and lift inflation.

Trading volumes were light on Thursday with many traders on holiday after Wednesday's Christmas holiday and before next week's New Year holiday.

Looser business regulations and tax cuts are expected to help propel US growth next year while analysts say that a clamp-down on illegal immigration and

the prospect of new tariffs on trading partners could increase price pressures, and weigh on the economy longer term.

That has boosted the dollar against its peers, though there remains a lot of uncertainty over exactly what policies will be introduced and what their impact will be.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Dhaka South City Corporation
Office of the Project Director
Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)
Nagar Bhaban, Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000

Memo:46.207.014.09.306.2024/930

Date: 26/12/2024

Request for Bids
Non-Consulting Services

Employer : Dhaka South City Corporation, MoLGRD&C
Project : Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)
Contract title : Hiring of Vehicles (2 Cars & 1 minibuses) for DCNUP
Country : Bangladesh
Credit No. : Cr 6361 BD
RFB NO : DCNUP/ NS-01A
Issued on : 26 December 2024

1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit in the amount of about US\$ 75.50 Million from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP) to be implemented by Dhaka South City Corporation and it intends to apply a part of the proceeds towards payments for **Hiring 3 nos (2 Cars & 1 minibuses) Vehicles** for DCNUP.

2. The Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP), now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for Hiring 3 nos (2 Cars & 1 minibuses) Vehicles for DCNUP in City Corporation Area up to project tenure i.e 30 June 2025.

3. Bidding will be conducted through national competitive procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, July 2016 updated in September 2023 and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the office of the undersigned and inspect the bidding document during office hours i.e. 0900 to 1700 hours BST.

5. The bidding document in English may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of BDT 2000.00, shall be deposited directly to A/C 1623806000063, Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP) GOB Sonali Bank Ltd, Nagar Bhaban Corporate Branch, Dhaka 1000, and as a proof, the original deposit slip shall be submitted with the tender document collected from the undersigned office during office hours showing proof copy of deposited money submitted in the said account.

6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 14 January 2025 upto 1500hrs BST. Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives who choose to attend at the address below on 14 January 2025 at 1530hrs BST.

7. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of BDT 80,000.00 (taka Eighty thousand) in the form of Pay order/ Bank draft from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh.

8. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all Bids.

9. The address referred to above is:

(Signature)
(Rajib Khadem)
Project Director, PIU
Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)
Dhaka South City Corporation
Tel: +880-2223350461
E-mail: pddcnupdscc24@gmail.com

(8 X 4)
ডিসেম্বর/পিআরডি/১৯২/২০২৪-২০২৫

Office of the Mathbaria Pourashava
Upazila: Mathbaria, District: Pirojpur
www.mathbariapourashava.gov.bd

Memo No. 4U/MP/639/2024/674

Date: 26/12/2024

e-GP Notice No. 02/2024-25 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal <https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>

SL No.	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of the work	Tender document last selling/ downloading date and time	Tender closing date and time	Tender opening date and time
1	1044553, LGCRRP/M athbaria/202 4-25/W-04	1.Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from Vatnari Hospital Road to Vatnari Hospital Office (ch00-58m) in Ward No. 05 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-58m. 2.Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from Pre-Cadet School to Nasir Doler house via Mahabub Mia house (ch00-214m) in Ward No. 09 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-214m. 3.Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from Court Office Approach Road to Krisi Office (00-64m) in Ward No. 05 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-64m. 4.Environmental Mitigation and Social Safe Guards under Mathbaria Pourashava.	26-Jan-2025 17:00	27-Jan-2025 11:30	27-Jan-2025 12:00
2	1044554, LGCRRP/M athbaria/202 4-25/W-05	1. Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from X Councilor Luchi house to Sagir Mia house (Ch00-90m) in Ward No. 06 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-90m. 2. Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from Mathbaria Betmore BC Road to Mamun Pasker house via Saisuddin Faruk, Salam & Govt Primary School (ch00-270m) in Ward No. 03 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-270m. 3. Estimate for Repairing Carpeting Road starting from Mathbaria Govt College Campus gate to Academic Bhobon via New Bhobon (ch00-253m) in Ward No. 06 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-253m 4. Environment Mitigation and Social Safe Guards under Mathbaria Pourashava	26-Jan-2025 17:00	27-Jan-2025 11:30	27-Jan-2025 12:00
3	1044555, LGCRRP/M athbaria/202 4-25/W-06	1. Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from R&H to Model Mosque (ch00-84m) & Model Mosque South Side Road (Ch84-110m) in Ward No. 06 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-110m. 2. Estimate for Upgrading RCC Road starting from Mathbaria Masua Road to SP Mamun House (ch00-50m) & SP Mamun house to Ramim Professor house (ch50m-224m) in Ward No. 02 under Mathbaria Pourashava. Total Length-224m. 3. Environmental Mitigation and Social Safe Guards under Mathbaria Pourashava.	26-Jan-2025 17:00	27-Jan-2025 11:30	27-Jan-2025 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e- Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any branch of the banks registered in the e-GP System. Furthe information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd.) For more details about Procurement Package, please contact the official inviting the tender.

(Signature)
Abdul Kayum
Administrator
Mathbaria Pourashava
&
Upazila Nirbahi Officer
Mathbaria, Pirojpur

GD-1297

Water transport strike disrupted supply chain

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chattogram

Inland water transport is still one of the major modes of cargo transportation in Bangladesh, a country crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers.

Take the instance of transportation of cargo imported through the country's premier seaport of Chattogram.

Over 60 percent of the 10 crore tonnes of cargo annually imported through this port is unloaded from large ships at sea.

Those are then transported by smaller lighter vessels through inland water routes to over 50 destinations or river points across the country.

Over 80 percent of cargo imported in bulk is delivered at sea and transported through waterways.

According to Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), overall cargo transported annually through the inland water routes reached 15 crore tonnes in fiscal year 2023-24.

It was merely 1.78 crore tonnes in fiscal year 2013-14.

So, a single day of service suspension in the sector can take a very heavy toll on the country's daily trade, businesses and economy as a whole by manifold.

This is in terms of disruptions to

supply chains and market stability and the hampering of industrial production.

Businesses felt this recently.

A two-day work abstention enforced by water transport workers ending on Saturday night brought cargo unloading at sea and river landing points as well as transportation over inland water routes to a standstill.



ANALYSIS

At least 20 mother vessels passed idle times with 4.50 lakh tonnes of imported cargo at Kutubdia and the outer anchorage of the Chattogram port.

As each of these vessels had to count \$20,000 on an average in demurrages for each day passed idle, the demurrage over these two days totalled to not less than \$8,00,000.

According to the businesses, such demurrages would ultimately be added to the import cost.

Another 10.50 lakh tonnes of goods got stuck in 773 lighter vessels, according to Bangladesh Water

Transport Coordination Cell (BWTCC), a private organisation that allocated these lighter vessels.

These vessels were either unloading those goods at 60 different destinations across the country or on way to those destinations.

These goods include mostly commodity items like wheat, sugar, lentil, yellow peas, salt, edible oil, coal, stone, industrial raw materials like cement clinker, slag, fertiliser and others.

Around 1,700 lighter vessels—1,200 owned by individuals and 500 owned by industrial units—are engaged in transporting these goods from Chattogram to the river landing points.

Parvez Ahmed, a leader of the Inland Vessel Owners Association of Chattogram (IVOAC), said importers usually hire these lighter vessels on condition of completing the transportation and unloading within a timeframe.

They have to pay Tk 2,000 to the vessel owner for use of the vessel for each additional day, he said.

Any disruption in the supply chain can lead to volatility in the commodity market, which fluctuates very frequently, and this is not acceptable when people are suffering from high

inflation, he said.

The service suspension also affected transportation of goods to industrial units, hampering production schedules, he said.

Satyajit Das Barman, head of business (grains and logistics) at TK Group, said the impact of a day of service suspension in waterway transportation was manifold.

Two vessels carrying around 77,000 tonnes of wheat imported by TK Group from Canada and Russia arrived on Thursday and had to pass idle times since yesterday morning.

If there was no service disruption, they could have started getting the cargo since Friday night and they had made promises to clients based on that assumption, said Barman.

Now they would have to wait till Tuesday to get the cargo, he said.

“Our vessel arrived at a time when there was no other vessel with fine quality wheat from Canada, which has strong market demand. If we got the cargo timely, we could have gained from the market a bit,” he added.

“Production in our flour factories got hampered for failing to avail the cargo while production in the bakeries we supply flour to also was hampered,” he said.

READ FULL STORY ONLINE

Harness expertise of NRBs to thrive globally: adviser

STAR BUSINESS REPORT



Bangladesh should enhance the quality of its workforce, embrace innovation, upskill the labour force and harness the expertise of non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) to thrive globally, Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain said yesterday.

With improved ICT infrastructure and strategic rebranding, Bangladesh can position itself as a hub for investment, technology and partnerships while getting ready to compete in a digital future, he said.

The adviser made the comments as the chief guest of a daylong NRB Conclave 2024 organised at Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka with the theme “Transforming Bangladesh through knowledge remittance”.

The event aimed to create a formal framework for involving NRBs as catalysts for national transformation, according to Bangladesh Brand Forum (BBF), the organiser.

The BBF organised the event with cooperation of Prime Bank PLC, bKash Limited and Team Group BD.

The conclave highlights the power of expertise and innovation of the non-resident Bangladeshis, Foreign Affairs Secretary Jashim Uddin said.

Beyond remittances, migrant Bangladeshis have the potential to revolutionise sectors like investment, technology, skill development, and nation branding, positioning Bangladesh as a competitive player at the global stage, he said.

China to see stable growth in coming years: experts

ANN/CHINA DAILY

China will continue to see stable GDP growth in the coming years as the world's second-largest economy shows strong resilience boosted by its technological and innovative capability and more supportive government policies to drive domestic demand and high-quality development, experts said on Friday.

New quality productive forces and new technologies are now being applied on a larger scale, providing a strong driving force and growth momentum for many new industrial sectors, said Wang Peng, a deputy researcher of the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences.

Wang said the booming new energy sector advances the process of green transformation, with a trend toward sustainable economic development.

China's economy is expected to enhance growth momentum through innovation and optimizing the industrial structure to achieve sustainable development.

Wang's comments came as China published the results of its fifth national economic census on Thursday, which showed that the country's economy had a solid foundation, strong resilience and enormous potential over the past five years.

“Compared to the previous results

of the economic census, China's economy shows characteristics of structural optimization and high-quality development with the strong momentum of enterprise innovation, rapid development of high-tech and new energy sectors,” Wang said.

The decline of total profits of industrial enterprises continued to narrow in November, showing that the Chinese economy is continuing its trend of recovery. Data released on Friday by the National Bureau of Statistics show that total profits of industrial enterprises above designated size across the country realized a total profit of 6.667 trillion yuan (\$913.40 billion) in the first 11

months, a year-on-year decline of 4.7 percent.

In November, total profits of enterprises declined by 7.3 percent year-on-year, compared with 10 percent in October.

Strong policy support including existing policy tools and the recent launch of a package of incremental policies has led to steady growth in industrial production and a corporate revenue turnaround from decline to increase in November. The government support has also pushed the transformation of the manufacturing industry into high-end, intelligent and green development, said Yu Weining, a statistician of NBS on Friday.

Sergel nearing Tk 1,000cr annual sales

FROM PAGE B1

same molecular formula, but some gained popularity on gaining people's confidence. And this confidence passes from person to person, he said.

There are 31 generic drugs that sell for over Tk 100 crore. The data showed that sales of 79 generic medicine were above Tk 50 crore.

The data indicates that although the sales of individual brands of products of some companies may not be high, but the brand value of the companies themselves ensures high sales of all their medicines.

Jubayer Alam, company secretary of Renata PLC, said most people over 18 years of age take gastrological medicine as there is no discipline when it comes to food intake and habits.

Due to this, many people suffer from ailments affecting the digestive system, he said.

Demand is growing for rosuvastatin drugs, which lowers cholesterol, as many people are dying of heart attacks, he added.

Even in developed countries, demand for such medicine is growing, so it also may see a good growth in the country, he added.

“We are really happy that we can serve a huge number of patients to overcome ulcer, gastroesophageal reflux disease and hyperacidity related problems with Maxpro,” Alam said.

“All Maxpro formulations are manufactured in USFDA, UKMHRA and Anvisa approved facilities so that patients get the best esomeprazole of the country,” he added.

Can apparel industry weather any storm?

FROM PAGE B1

slogans for pay hikes and increments, disrupting the already struggling local apparel manufacturing.

Due to unrest, vandalism and fires, factories in major industrial belts like Gazipur, Savar, Ashulia, Zirani and Zirabo were shut down for several months.

In September, factory owners, labour leaders and workers agreed on a resolution for their 18 point demand.

The minimum wage board increased the annual increment for garment workers to 9 percent from previous 5 -- one of the key labour demands in the 18 point.

The new increment took effect in December and the other demands, except for the amendment of the labour law, have been met too. The government has promised to amend the law by March next year.

For many, the resolution after the unrest meant production resumption, but for a few, it was worse.

For instance, Beximco Group laid off over 40,000 workers from its 16

textile and garment units.

The outgoing year involved correcting export data, as export earnings were previously overstated due to incorrect calculations.

In a final calculation, the central bank said that the garment sector's earnings in fiscal 2023-2024 were \$36 billion, rather than the \$47 billion calculated by the state-owned Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

The outgoing year was challenging but also a time for business recovery as work orders rebounded with political stability, said Faruque Hassan, a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Hassan said international retailers and brands are now returning with work orders as sales in the USA and the EU have grown with the rebounding of retail sales.

According to BDL Group's Managing Director Jabbar, 2024 was one of the highest-exporting years, as they received massive work orders from international clothing retailers and brands.

“Now we really need to do more for

better growth of the sector,” Jabbar told The Daily Star over the phone.

He recommended establishing a dedicated EPB-like institution for the garment sector and ramping up investment in man-made fibre and sportswear segments to capture more global markets.

Meanwhile, Rizwan Rahman, a former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), called for political stability for business growth.

He said the law and order situation has not improved to the expected level and is still affecting the business environment.

According to former BGMEA president Hassan, apart from political and labour unrest, the perennial power and energy crisis severely impacted investment inflow into the sector. As a result, many jobs could not be created in the sector this year.

Hassan also suggested investing more in man-made fibre to get better prices and increase exports, as the demand for specialised garments is increasing worldwide.

Financial services sector

FROM PAGE B1

services sector may eventually be brought to the brink of destruction if the interests of depositors and investors are not properly protected.

Regarding opportunities in the banking industry, he said it could increase contributions towards addressing both new and existing challenges through initiatives to finance sustainable and environmental projects.

Mansur informed that while all the banks have predetermined goals in terms of investing in various sectors, most bank officials do not know how the money will actually be spent.

“Therefore, the BIBM can work to increase the understanding of bank officials on these issues,” he said, adding that innovative ideas like green bonds should also be brought forward.

The Bangladesh Bank governor further said small and medium

enterprises as well as emerging and unconventional industries, such as those focusing green and climate finance, are not well suited for availing financing from banks.

“Funds are being given to numerous sectors, but they are not being transferred. The people in charge of banks and other financial institutions are either not very excited about these industries or are not willing to take chances,” he said.

“Here, we must adopt a new perspective,” Mansur added, conveying his hope that the country's financial institutions will play a stronger role in funding the non-conventional and new sectors.

Mansur, also chairman of the BIBM governing board, urged for addressing new challenges in the banking sector, such as that involving climate financing, green financing, developments in financial services and technological innovations.

Noting that such institutions are much needed for developing the

banking industry, he said the BIBM has been able to play an important role in building human resources for this segment.

Furthermore, Mansur asked the BIBM to focus on attracting foreign students and spreading its name in the international arena.

Masrur Arefin, vice chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh, said the banking industry must move forward with the times.

“We need to increase our understanding on various topics, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and blockchain,” he added.

Arefin, also the managing director of City Bank, further said the country's digital banking services have reached a certain threshold, as every bank now provides digital support to their customers.

He expressed hope that Bangladesh Bank will look into the extent of digital lending services provided by banks.

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB)				
TCB Bhaban, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215				
www.tcb.gov.bd				
Commercial Section				
Invitation For Tender (National) for Purchase of				
(a) 2,20,00,000 Litre Refined Soyabean Oil, (b) 1,10,00,000 Litre Refined Rice Bran Oil (c) 2,20,00,000 Litre Refined Palm Olein, (d) 10,000 M. Ton Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.				
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Commerce.		
2	Agency	Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB)		
3	Procuring Entry Name	Additional Director (Commercial), TCB, Dhaka.		
4	Procuring Entry Code	Not applicable.		
5	Procuring Entry District	Dhaka.		
6	Invitation for	a) Refined Soyabean Oil b) Refined Rice Bran Oil c) Refined Palm Olein d) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.		
7	Invitation Ref. No.	a) 26.05.0000.016.08.497.24.4005, b) 26.05.0000.016.08.497.24.4006, c) 26.05.0000.016.08.497.24.4007, d) 26.05.0000.016.08.497.24.4008		
8	Date	29-12-2024		
KEY INFORMATION				
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM) (National)		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
10	Budget and Source of Funds	TCB's Own Fund.		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
11	Tender Package No.	a) TCB/Imp-114/ Soyabean Oil/ 2024-25, b) TCB/Imp-114/ Rice bran oil/ 2024-25, c) TCB/Imp-114/ Palm Olein/ 2024-25, d) TCB/Imp-114/ Red Lentil/ 2024-25		
12	Tender Package Name	a) Refined Soyabean Oil, b) Refined Rice Bran Oil, c) Refined Palm Olein, d) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.		
13	Tender Invitation/ Publication Date	30-12-2024		
14	Tender Documents Last Selling Date and Time	Date	Time	
15	Tender Closing Date and Time	12-01-2025	17:00 P.M	
16	Tender Opening Date and Time	13-01-2025	12:00 P.M	
17	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address		
Selling Tender Document of each item can be purchased from the banks & offices as mentioned in right column.		(1) Sonali Bank Ltd. Kawran Bazar Branch, TCB Bhaban, Dhaka. (2) Trust Bank Ltd. Kawran Bazar Branch, and (3) Accounts & Finance Division, TCB's Principal Office at Dhaka.		
Receiving Tender Document		In front of TCB's reception (2 nd floor), TCB Bhaban, 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.		
Opening Tender Document		Board Room, TCB.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
18	Brief Eligibility of Tenderer	Bonafide Suppliers. Details conditions have been mentioned in the Tender documents.		
19	Brief Description of goods	a) 2,20,00,000 (Two Crore Twenty Lac) Litre Refined Soyabean Oil Packed in 02 (Two) Litre Food Grade PET Bottle. b) 1,10,00,000 (One Crore Ten Lac) Litre Refined Rice Bran Oil Packed in 02 (Two) Litre Food Grade PET Bottle. c) 2,20,00,000 (Two Crore Twenty Lac) Litre Refined Palm Olein Packed in 02 (Two) Litre Food Grade PET Bottle d) 10,000 (Ten Thousand) M.Tons Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil packed in 50 kg bag.		
20	Price of Tender Document	Price of (a) Refined Soyabean Oil tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand), (b) Refined Rice Bran Oil tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand), (c) Refined Palm Olein tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand) & (d) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand).		
	Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount (BDT)
21	1.	a) Refined Soyabean Oil b) Refined Rice Bran Oil c) Refined Palm Olein d) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.	Offers are to be made on TCB's Godowns of Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Barisal, Moulvibazar, Mymensingh, Cumilla, Madaripur, Jhenaidah, Bogura, Dinajpur, Gazipur/District's godown/Upazila's godown.	Tender is to be submitted along with Tender Security amounting to: a) BDT 7,60,00,000 (BDT Seven Crore Sixty Lac) Only. (In case of partial quantity tender security will be proportionate). b) BDT 4,41,00,000 (BDT Four Crore Forty One Lac) Only. (In case of partial quantity tender security will be proportionate). c) BDT 7,95,00,000 (BDT Seven Crore Ninety Five Lac) Only. (In case of partial quantity tender security will be proportionate). d) BDT 2,15,00,000 (BDT Two Crore Fifteen Lac) Only. (In case of partial quantity tender security will be proportionate). in the form of Pay-Order/ Bank Draft/ Bank Guarantee must be issued from any scheduled Bank of Bangladesh. After issuing NOA, the awardee is to submit 5% (Five Percent) Performance Security in the similar form of Pay-Order/Bank Draft/Bank Guarantee.
Entire quantity of Goods is to be supplied within (a) 28-04-2025 (b) 28-04-2025 (c) 28-04-2025 (d) 28-04-2025				
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
22	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Golam Khorshed		
23	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Additional Director, Commercial (Substitute), TCB Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.		
24	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Principal Office, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.		
25	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Telephone No. 55014273	Telephone No. 55014273	E-mail: tcb@tcb.gov.bd, tcbimp@tcb.gov.bd
26	Special Instruction a) All terms and conditions related to the tender and product details are mentioned in the tender document. b) The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender in whole/in part without assigning any reason.			
GD- 1295		<div>29/12/24</div> <div>(Md. Golam Khorshed) Deputy Secretary Additional Director, Commercial (Substitute) Trading Corporation of Bangladesh</div>		

Global commodity prices may drop in 2025. Can Bangladesh benefit from it?

SUKANTA HALDER

Global commodity prices are projected to decrease in 2025, but Bangladesh may fail to reap the benefits if the depreciation of the local currency continues.

Bangladesh relies heavily on imports of essential food items such as edible oils, lentils, onions, sugar, and spices, which saw a 5 percent year-on-year price increase in December.

Businesspeople warn that a stronger US dollar will further drive up the cost of imports and worsen inflation.

After four months of relative stability, the US dollar surged in December, raising import costs.

Importers are currently opening letters of credit at Tk 127 or Tk 128 per dollar, adding pressure on businesses and consumers alike.

The World Bank, in its October Commodity Market Outlook, forecasted a 5 percent decline in global commodity prices in 2025 and a further 2 percent drop in 2026.

The report also predicted the World Bank's aggregate commodity price index will hit its lowest level since 2020.

Energy prices are expected to lead to the decline, with the energy price index projected to fall by 6 percent in 2024 and another 6 percent in 2025, followed by a 2 percent drop in 2026.

Brent crude oil prices are forecast to average \$80 per barrel in 2024, dropping to \$73 in 2025 and \$72 in 2026.

However, stable prices for metals and agricultural commodities and rising natural gas costs may moderate the overall decline.

The World Bank noted that the annual average oil prices are likely to fall for four consecutive years, settling slightly above 2021 levels.

Taslim Shahriar, senior assistant general manager at the Meghna Group of Industries, one of the biggest local commodity importers and processors, said 2025 could bring relief for Bangladeshi consumers.

However, he mentioned that if the taka



As Bangladesh relies heavily on imports for some essential food items, experts say that a stronger US dollar will further drive up the cost of imports and worsen inflation.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

continues to weaken, the benefits of the declining global prices may not fully be gained.

Shahriar also said that the price of the US dollar has risen from Tk 122 to Tk 128-129 in recent weeks.

While soybean prices have already dropped globally, sugar prices could decrease further if production improves in India and Thailand.

Wheat supply is also stable, and prices are expected to decline, along with soybean oil, he added.

Bangladesh has been grappling with inflation above 9 percent since March

2023.

To curb inflation, the central bank raised the policy rate five times this year to 10 percent.

Additionally, a crawling peg exchange rate introduced in May allowed banks to trade US dollars freely within a range of Tk 117.

Moinul Khan, chairman of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, told The Daily Star that consumers in Bangladesh will enjoy some of the benefits of the World Bank's forecast in 2025.

The prices of some consumer goods have been on a downward trend for the

past 15 days or a month, he said.

Besides, the government has taken various tax and duty related measures to keep the prices of essential commodities under control, he mentioned.

In addition, some non-tariff related barriers were removed in some products, Khan said.

On the other hand, the US dollar has also created a place of relief, because remittance rose 14 percent in November.

Remittance sent home by Bangladeshis living abroad rose 14 percent year-on-year to \$2.2 billion in November, according to Bangladesh Bank's data.

Summit Power gets time to submit financial statement

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has granted Summit Power time to submit its financial statement, according to a disclosure published on the Dhaka Stock Exchange website yesterday.

The listed power generation company now has until March 31 of 2025 to submit its audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024.

The same will be applicable for the submission of the unaudited financial statements for the quarters ending on September 30 and December 31 of 2024.

The original deadlines were October 28 and November 14 of 2024 and January 30 of 2025 respectively.

Summit Power assured stakeholders that it would complete the necessary audits and prepare all required reports within the extended timeline, as per the disclosure.

The development comes after the company recently sought a five-month extension from the BSEC for submitting the audited financial report for fiscal year 2023-24, which ended in June this year.

Publicly listed companies have to submit audited financial reports within 134 days of the end of a fiscal year and hold the annual general meeting within the following fiscal year.

Russian manufacturing growth slows in Dec

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia's manufacturing sector continued to expand in December, but at a slower pace than the previous month, as inflationary pressures remained high and business confidence weakened, S&P Global reported on Friday.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for Russian manufacturing edged down to 50.8 in December from 51.3 in November, indicating a marginal improvement in sector health. A PMI reading above 50 signals growth, while below 50 indicates contraction.

New orders saw a slight increase, supported by sustained client demand, but the growth rate was below the long-term average.

Export orders rose for the fifth consecutive month, driven by increased trade with neighbouring countries, although the pace of expansion was the weakest since August. Despite the growth in orders, output expansion was modest, with firms citing softer demand and material shortages.

"The rise in production was linked to a sustained uptick in new order inflows," the report noted.

Inflationary pressures remained elevated, with input costs rising due to material price hikes and unfavourable exchange rate movements. Output prices also increased, although the rate of inflation softened to a three-month low.

Stocks gain for second day

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The major indexes of the stock market in Bangladesh rose for the second consecutive day yesterday.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), rose by 20.33 points, or 0.39 percent from the previous day before closing at 5,204.

The other two indices of the DSE showcased a mixed performance when the DSES index that represents the Shariah-based companies edged down by 0.34 points, or 0.03 percent, to 1,166 and the DS30 index for the blue-chip firms went up by 4.40 points, or 0.23 percent, to 1,931.

At Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), the CSE All Share Price Index (CASPI), the prime index of the port city bourse, saw the similar rising trend, as the index grew by 36.15 points, or 0.25 percent, to settle the

day at 14,471.

Of the issues that changed hands on the DSE trading floor, 225 saw a hike in prices, 100 closed lower and the remaining did not witness any price fluctuation.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of Dhaka bourse, rose by 20.33 points, or 0.39 percent, from the previous day

Turnover, which indicates the total value of the shares traded on the country's premier bourse, stood at Tk 374 crore, posting an increase of 32.66 percent compared to the previous day's trading session.

Orion Infusion Ltd emerged as the most traded share, with a turnover of Tk 20.6 crore.

In its daily market update, BRAC

EPL Stock Brokerage said most of the large-cap sectors posted positive performance yesterday.

The food & allied sector booked the highest gain of 1.24 percent, followed by telecommunication 0.53 percent, fuel & power 0.52 percent, banking 0.45 percent, and engineering 0.19 percent.

However, the non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) sector posted a loss of 0.27 percent, and the pharmaceuticals sector logged a 0.54 percent loss.

Investors today showed interest mostly in the shares of BAT Bangladesh, Pubali Bank, Southeast Bank, Eastern Bank, City Bank, Robi Axiata, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Far Chemicals Industries, Shahjalal Islami Bank and Legacy Footwear, according to the day's market update by LankaBangla Financials.

But none of the companies saw a double-digit growth in share prices.

Decoding the economic impact of BDT/USD movements

ASIF IBRAHIM

In 2024, we have seen the highest devaluation of the Bangladeshi taka (BDT) against the United States dollar (USD). The exchange rate between the BDT and the USD significantly influences various facets of business operations in Bangladesh, including import and export costs, foreign investment, profitability, and inflation. Incorporating statistical data from authoritative sources provides a clearer understanding of these impacts. In 2000, the exchange rate was approximately BDT 52 per USD.

Ten years later in 2010, it rose to BDT 69 per USD. On December 27, 2024, as per Bangladesh Bank, the amount was 120. A crawling peg exchange rate was introduced in May this year, allowing banks to buy and sell US dollars freely within a mid-range of Tk 117. However, it rose to 127 plus or minus in the curb market.

A weaker taka makes imports more expensive, increasing costs for businesses reliant on foreign goods. The export-oriented industries benefit from enhanced competitiveness, as Bangladeshi goods become cheaper for international buyers.

However, we have historically seen that international buyers adjust buying prices according to the movement of the exchange rate.

Naturally, on the counter-narrative, appreciation of the taka reduces import costs, benefiting businesses reliant on foreign raw materials. It may also reassure investors about the economic strength of the country. However, it hurts export competitiveness, as Bangladeshi products become more expensive for foreign buyers.

Unfortunately, we have seen depreciation of taka for a while now. It makes investments in Bangladesh more attractive in local currency terms, enticing foreign investors.

However, excessive depreciation can raise concerns about economic stability. Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves, as per the last published amount on the Bangladesh Bank website, are approximately \$24.35 billion in November 2024.

On a worrisome level, the Inflation reached 11.38 percent in November 2024, driven by rising import costs and currency depreciation, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. To stabilise the economy, the Bangladesh Bank raised its repo rate to 10 percent, aiming to curb inflation and support the currency. However, higher interest rates have increased borrowing costs for businesses.

We have seen the impact of the increased rate of borrowing for project finance in the drop in the percentage of private sector credit growth. This is paradoxical, as private sector investments will be crucial to overcoming the economic crisis we face as a nation.

Going forward, businesses can mitigate exchange rate risks through hedging strategies to offset potential losses. They can also diversify sourcing and markets to reduce reliance on any single currency and implement flexible pricing models to adjust for currency fluctuations.

The BDT/USD exchange rate is a critical factor influencing the Bangladesh economy. Its effects are wide-ranging, from importers grappling with rising costs to exporters capitalising on competitiveness. By staying informed through reliable data from sources such as the Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, and Trading Economics, businesses can navigate these challenges effectively, maximising opportunities and minimising losses.

The writer is a former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI)



Tokyo's property boom looks built to last

REUTERS, Singapore

Tokyo is bustling. Office vacancy rates in the Asian city are around 3 percent, sharply lower than 15 percent for New York and 8 percent for London. Japan's rising appeal to financiers, tourists and global buyout firms alike, plus its enduring low interest rates, will underpin another strong year for its commercial property market.

Total transaction volume in real estate, including offices, hotels and logistics, stood at \$23.6 billion in the first half of 2024, per MSCI, the highest level since the global index compiler began collating such data in 2007. That's up nearly 30 percent from the first half of 2022. Capital and income returns are eye-catching too.

These rose to a combined annualised 4.8 percent by mid 2024 in local currency terms, up from 4.4 percent in 2023, compared to declines of between 1 percent and 7 percent seen in 2023 in the United States, the UK and Australia.

Japan is benefiting from a strong recovery in office-going culture after the Covid-19 pandemic. The weak yen

means visitor numbers are surging: from January to October 2024, Japan saw 30 million visitors compared with 25 million for the whole of 2023. Hotel

occupancy rates are high too.

Meanwhile, Japanese companies are under official pressure to improve shareholder returns; disposing of

non-core property is one of the fastest ways to achieve the goal. Property and railway firm Seibu, for example, tapped potential buyers including Blackstone and Singapore state investor GIC in 2024 for a central Tokyo office building for at least \$1.95 billion, per Reuters. That's lucrative because such assets are usually held on a seller's books at acquisition cost.

Though the Bank of Japan has started to reverse a decade of ultra-cheap money, it is taking baby steps. The short-term interest rate may only rise 50 basis points to 0.75 percent in 2025: with commercial real estate financing rates hovering under 2 percent, both local and foreign buyers should be able to cope with small increases.

Of course, a hot market can always overheat. The BOJ said in October that loans to real estate businesses have stayed high on an increasing trend. Particularly, the commercial real estate prices to rent ratio has been above levels seen in the period leading up to the 2008 global financial crisis. For now, there seem to be enough big buyers and sellers to keep the market in a happy balance.



The night view of a skyscraper in Tokyo. The total transaction volume in real estate, including offices, hotels and logistics in Japan, stood at \$23.6 billion in the first half of 2024.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE