

President's Resignation: Can Political Parties Find Common Ground?

Fortnightly Magazine

Business Outlook

www.businessoutlookbd.com

13th Year of Publication

01 November 2024

Price: Tk 30



Interim Government Faces Flak For Egg Price Volatility

Universal Pension Scheme: A Flawed AL Legacy

**PADMA BRIDGE
RAIL LINK
PROJECT**

Steel Standard:
IS 1786

BSRM STEEL: 90%



**BANGABANDHU
TUNNEL**

Steel Standard:
ASTM A706
Grade 60 &
HRB 400E

BSRM STEEL: 72%



**DHAKA ELEVATED
EXPRESSWAY**

Steel Standard:
BDS ISO
6935-2 2021

BSRM STEEL: 73%



**ROOPPUR NUCLEAR
POWER PLANT**

Steel Standard: GOST R 52544

BSRM STEEL: 100%



High standard steels
used in megastructures are
**SAFEGUARDING OUR
NATION'S FUTURE**

BSRM urges all industries to make products maintaining high standards to help make the country a safer place, together.

Business Outlook

From the Editor

Crack down hard on egg market manipulators

Eggs are the most affordable source of protein, especially for the lower and middle classes. It is also a very common consumer item for the rich despite having many other alternative sources of protein. So, any volatility in the egg market will certainly affect everyone -- from the poor to the rich. A group of unscrupulous businessmen has been playing with the essential item to make a brisk business. It's true that the recent floods have impacted the egg market. The demand for eggs has increased while its daily production has declined by approximately 50 lakh pieces due to severe flooding that has affected poultry farms in the southeastern region in the current calendar year. As the market instability persisted for over a month, the Department of Agricultural Marketing set the price of each egg at Tk11.87. However, despite the effort, the market remained uncontrolled. Consumers still have to pay Tk14 or more per egg. According to data from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the current daily demand for eggs in Bangladesh is 5 crore. However, the Bangladesh Poultry Industries Central Council said the egg production stands at 4.5 crore. Due to the reduction by 50 lakh eggs in production caused by flooding in the southeastern region, the daily production has now dropped to 4 crore. To reduce the gap between supply and demand, the interim government moved quickly and the Ministry of Commerce approved the import of 4 crore more eggs to increase supply and make the market stable. A dozen of traders have been given permission by the ministry's trade-1 wing on October 23 to import eggs. The import of eggs and the import permit will remain valid till December 31. Earlier, the ministry allowed seven designated firms to import 4.05 crore eggs on October 8.

However, many market experts and economists believe the steps are not enough to contain the price hike of eggs. Efforts should also focus on ensuring the fair price of one-day chicks and poultry feed. Like the eggs and meat under the poultry industry, the one-day chicks and feed markets have grown big and surpassed over a billion dollars in annual sales shared by a few breeders and a handful of companies. The interim government should conduct a thorough audit of the companies by the competitive commission to see how these companies affect the sector. The market monopoly must be broken to remove all kinds of distortions. Those unscrupulous businessmen must be brought to book. The interim government has no obligation to favour or fear any business group. Its obligation is only to serve the interest of the masses. ■



(Sikder Md Sadrul Hasan)

s69hasan@yahoo.com

Editor & Publisher

Sikder Md Sadrul Hasan

Managing Editor

Afroja Bilkis

News Team

Siddique Islam, Salahuddin A. Bablu,
Masum Billah, Saadman Sajjad, Kayes M Sohel,
Ashrafur Islam, Jasim Uddin Khan
and Fahad Ferdows.

Contributors

Zafar Malik, Syed Ishtiaque Reza
Kashem Mahamud

Staff Correspondent

Shahed Farid

USA Correspondent

Waliul Alam

UK Correspondent

Nurul Akbar Bhuiyan

Photo Department

Bulbul Ahmed, Sheikh Mamun

Cartoonist

Syed Rashad Imam (Tanmoy)

IT and Graphic Design

Rizoanul Islam

Tonmoy Rajbangshi

Head of Marketing

Basiruzzaman Akond

Marketing Operation

Chandan Rajbangshi

Published by the Editor

From

Zahan Plaza (3rd floor), 42/1-Ka,
Segun Baghicha, Dhaka-1000.

Printed from

Shariatpur Printing Press,
234 Fakirapul, Dhaka-1000.

Editorial, News & Commercial Office

Razzak Plaza, 9th Floor (L-10)
2, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani,
Moghbar Crossing, Dhaka-1217.

Telephone : 01819 200 641, 01627 140 427

Email : bdbusinessoutlook@gmail.com

Website

www.businessoutlookbd.com

All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or
part without written permission is prohibited.

Volume-13

Issue-20, 01 - 15 November 2024

Released on 31 October 2024



Cover Story

22 Interim Government Faces Flak For Egg Price Volatility

11 RMG Sector Embraces Automation Will Workers Be Left Behind?

13 Businesses Worried As Interest Rates Keep Rising

16 Slow Investment, Liquidity Crisis Affects Pvt Sector Credit Growth

29 Economy Facing Challenge As Lending, Investment Grind To Halt

PENSION



18 Universal Pension Scheme: A Flawed AL Legacy

32 Fashion Brands Face Criticism For Failure To Protect Labour Rights In Bangladesh

42 IMF, World Bank Meetings Clouded By Wars, Slow Economic Growth, US Election



POLITICS

05

President's Resignation: Can Political Parties Find Common Ground?

Read **Business Outlook**

To get Half Month's Business & Economic News, Views and Analysis in one fold

Call your hawker or contact : 01847 305167, 01819 200641

RMG Workers' Unrest 'Outsiders Fanned The Flame'

Lt Gen (retd) Abdul Hafiz, special assistant to the chief adviser of the interim government, stated on October 20 that external forces played a role in fuelling the recent labour unrest in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. He added that these provocations had been identified. Following a visit to two factories in Ashulia, Hafiz shared his observations, accompanied by Lutfe Siddiqi, special envoy to the chief adviser. The officials spoke with workers and engaged in discussions with factory owners and management. They also visited Zone Control Cells and held talks with law enforcement officials. Hafiz noted, "Initially, the unrest seemed to stem from salary-related demands. However, we have identified external provocations that contributed to the unrest. Necessary measures have been taken, and as a result, 100% of the factories are now operational." He stressed the importance of the



garment sector as a key driver of the economy, urging cooperation to ensure uninterrupted production. "Nearly all factories in Ashulia, Savar, and Jirabo are functioning without disruption," he added. Major General Md Moin Khan, GOC of Savar Cantonment, Police Superintendent of Shilpa Police-1 Sarwar Alam, and other high-ranking officers from various forces were also present during the visit. ■

Tk30,000 Crore In Gas Bill Due Till August

Government and private entities owe Tk30,000 crore in gas bill to authorities, Petrobangla Chairman Zanendra Nath Sarkar told reporters at the headquarters of the state-run energy company on October 23. Government entities owe majority of the sum, and all gas supply related costs are catered for through the bills collected from residential, commercial and industrial sources, he said. Zanendra also said there are now 354 pending applications for piped gas supply connections to different industrial units. The connections would be allowed after consultation with the interim government, the official said. Petrobangla has disconnected a total of 2,06,650 illegal gas connections and removed 443.64 kilometre illegal pipelines across the country during July 2023-June 2024, saving total 25 million cubic metre gas worth Tk1.41 crore, Zanendra further informed reporters. Petrobangla is also working to compensate for a potential gas supply loss due to the falling reserves in Bibiyana gas field, by initiating works for drilling 50 new wells and undertaking plans to drill 100 more. ■



Bank Employees Also Have To File Tax Returns



Bank officials and staff in four city corporation areas of Bangladesh are now required to submit their tax returns online, similar to government employees. The four city corporations are-- Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur, and Narayanganj City Corporations. The Banking Regulations and Policy Department of Bangladesh Bank issued this directive on October 23. Referring to a special order issued by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) on 22 October, the announcement says all bank employees will have to follow the instructions. All managing directors and chief executive officers of scheduled banks operating in the country have been instructed to ensure that their employees adhere to the online tax return submission requirement. The central bank's notice explained that this directive has been issued under the authority granted by Section 45 of the Banking Companies Act, 1991. ■

Import & Regulatory Duty Reduced To Boost Supply Of Rice In Market

The government has reduced import duty and regulatory duty on the import of rice alongside withdrawing advance tax to keep the price of rice within the purchasing power of common people and thus keep it at a tolerable level. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued a gazette notification in this regard. The move is expected to boost the supply of rice in the market and also to ensure food security for the common people. Under the fresh decision, the import duty on rice has been reduced to 15 percent from the existing 25 percent, the regulatory duty to 5 percent from the existing 25 percent, and withdrew the existing 5 percent advance tax. The NBR said that with such a move, the price of per kg rice will reduce by Taka 14.40. ■



Government Okays Import Of 4 Crore Eggs To Keep Market Stable



The Ministry of Commerce has approved the import of 4.0 crore more eggs to increase supply and make the market stable. A notification in this regard was issued by the ministry's internal trade-1 wing on October 23. According to the notification, 12 traders have been allowed to import the eggs and the import permit will remain valid till December 31, 2024. In a bid to address the volatility in the egg market, the Ministry allowed seven designated firms to import 4.05 crore eggs on October 8. ■

IMF Cuts Bangladesh's Growth To 4.5% For FY25

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on October 22 lowered the economic growth forecast for Bangladesh in the ongoing FY25, after similar predictions made by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank recently. According to the IMF, Bangladesh is expected to see 4.5% economic growth in the current fiscal year, down from its April projection of 6.6%. This marks the lowest growth estimate in nearly 20 years, excluding the pandemic-affected fiscal year of 2019-20. In its latest edition of the World Economic Outlook released on the day, the multilateral agency said the global battle against inflation has largely been won, even though price pressures persist in some countries. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, inflation is likely to remain elevated, reaching 10.7% in FY25, up from 9.7% a year ago. Earlier this month, the World Bank downgraded its outlook for Bangladesh,



predicting economic growth of just 4% for the fiscal 2024-25, down from an April forecast of 5.7%. Last month, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) also trimmed its growth outlook for Bangladesh, forecasting the economy to expand by 5.1% in the current fiscal 2024-25, down from its April projection of 6.6%. ■



President's Resignation: Can Political Parties Find Common Ground?

Business Outlook Report

Will political parties be able to reach a consensus on the issue of the resignation of President Mohammed Shahabuddin? A serious debate and discomfort prevail in the political arena following the president's remarks on the fallen Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who fled the country in the face of a mass uprising on August 5. In a recent and rare interview with senior journalist and daily Manab Zamin Chief Editor Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, the president said he had no documentary evidence of Sheikh Hasina's resignation. He had not seen or received the resignation of Sheikh Hasina from the post of prime minister. This triggered a serious debate in the political circle. Many were trying to find the actual meaning of the president's remarks while others see it as an effort to create a scope of keeping space for the fallen prime minister and

her party in politics. Many expressed suspicion that this might have been a parley to create a constitutional vacuum in the country. The remarks came to the fore at a moment when Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman, who had a major role in succeeding the mass uprising of the students and the people, was not in the country. He was on a 10-day visit to the USA and Canada. Many political analysts believe the new debate in such a crucial time is significant although the interim government finally managed the situation. But still, the issue was not resolved. The leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, who first reacted to the remarks of the president regarding the prime minister's resignation letter, still believe the president is somehow engaged in a conspiracy to unsettle the interim government and also the student-led revolution. In a quick response, Law Adviser Prof Asif

Nazrul in a press briefing said the remarks of the president are a kind of breach of his oath. So, he lost the credibility to stay in the presidency. Asif Nazrul said it's a contradictory stance of the president as he had clearly said in his nationwide speech that he had accepted the resignation letter of Sheikh Hasina and accepted it. In an immediate move, Prof Asif Nazrul and Information Adviser Nahid Islam met Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and discussed the issue. But nothing of their discussion was made public. No statement was even issued in this regard. However, there was speculation in the social and mainstream media that the chief justice was offered to become the new president if the president resigns. However, the chief justice did not agree with this offer and expressed his desire to continue in his post. In the meantime, the public relations office of the president also issued a statement saying the resigna-

tion by Sheikh Hasina from the prime minister's post is a settled issue and there is no scope of creating any debate over it. In such a situation, the student leaders still continued their discussions with different political parties. The leaders of the main political party BNP met Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus and conveyed their party's stance that they believe the resignation of the president right now may lead to a constitutional crisis as the current constitution does not specify the procedure of the appointment of a new president when there is no alternative to taking over his charge as parliament has been dissolved and speaker of the parliament has also resigned. However, the leaders of the student movement said the issue of the president's resignation is political, not constitutional. The political parties are not of a single view on the issue.

These things still move in an unclear way and none can say how the issue will be settled. Only time will say what will happen. But it's clear any mistake about such a sensitive and critical issue may invite great danger which may go beyond management and the price of that mistake might be high. So, all the players in the political field and beyond have to handle the issue with great caution in a consensus manner.

President's Interview With Manab Zamin Chief Editor

President Mohammed Shahabuddin has said he heard Sheikh Hasina had resigned as the prime minister, but he does not have any documentary evidence. "I tried [to collect the resignation letter] many times but failed. Maybe she did not get the time," he added.

The president said this when Manab Zamin Chief Editor Matiur Rahman Chowdhury met him and wanted to know about ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation letter. The write-up that carries the conversation was published in the daily's political magazine "Janatar Chokh" on Octo-

ber 20. Hasina left the country on August 5 following a student-led mass uprising. According to section 57(a) of the constitution, the prime minister's office shall become vacant if he/she resigns from the office at any time by handing the resignation letter to the president. During the conversation,



Mohammed Shahabuddin, President of Bangladesh

the president said, "At 10:30am on August 5, the Bangabhaban had got a call from the prime minister's residence, saying the honourable prime minister would visit the Bangabhaban to call on His Excellency the President. Right afterwards, preparations began at the Bangabhaban. But within an hour, another call came saying she [Hasina] won't be coming." There was news of unrest everywhere, he said. "[At the time] I don't know what's going to happen. I can't sit around and depend on rumours. So, I asked Military Secretary General Adil to find out [what is happening]. He had no news either. We were waiting, even watching the television scrolls. There was no news anywhere." "At one point, I heard she had left the country. She didn't tell me anything. I just told you [interviewer] whatever is true. Anyway, when Army Chief General Waker came to the Bangabhaban, I tried to find out if the prime minister resigned. He gave me the same answer: 'I heard she resigned'. She perhaps did not get the time to let [us]

know." Shahabuddin added, "When things came under control, one day the cabinet secretary came to collect the copy of the resignation letter. I told him that I too am looking for it." At one stage of the conversation with Matiur Rahman, the president said, "There is no room for debate in this

regard anymore. The prime minister has left and that is the truth. Even then, just to ensure this question never arises again, I sought the Supreme Court's opinion on the matter." In response to the reference sent by him, the Appellate Division of the SC, headed by the then chief justice Obaidul Hassan, gave its opinion on August 8. It said an interim government may be formed to remove the constitutional vacuum and to ensure smooth operations of the executive, and also the president is allowed to swear in a chief adviser and other advisers of the interim government.

Asif Nazrul: Self-Contradictory Statements Cast Doubt On President's Eligibility

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul has said the president's remarks concerning ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation letter are not only misleading but also represent a serious breach of constitutional duty. He said on August 5, the president himself

mentioned in a speech that he had received and accepted the resignation letter of the former prime minister. The law adviser said now if the president claims—nearly two and a half months later—that the former prime minister did not submit a resignation letter, this would be a form of self-contradiction. He further emphasised that through various actions, it has become clear to the entire nation that Hasina had indeed resigned, and the president had accepted it.

Asif Nazrul further said: “It amounts to a violation of his oath because, in his speech to the nation on August 5 at 11:20pm, flanked by the chiefs of the three armed forces, he explicitly stated that ‘Sheikh Hasina has submitted her resignation letter to me,’ and he accepted it. Afterwards, the Supreme Court’s Appellate Division was consulted to seek guidance on the next steps under Article 106 of the Constitution. The then chief justice and other judges provided an opinion.” He continued: “The first line of that opinion was, ‘Since the prime minister has resigned under the current circumstances...’. Following the prime minister’s resignation and the dissolution of Parliament by the president, we sent a note from the Ministry’s office to the president, based on the opinion of the Appellate Division, regarding the formation of an interim government. The president reviewed and accepted this opinion. He then proceeded to form an interim government himself.”

He further remarked: “According to the Constitution of Bangladesh, if the President lacks mental or physical competence, or if he engages in serious misconduct, there is provision for action to be taken regarding his eligibility to remain in office.” The adviser added: “How can a person in the highest office, after announcing the resignation in front of the entire nation and seeking the opinion of the highest court, now claim otherwise? It is beyond my comprehension. There is no room for self-contradictory statements now.” He said: “If you

contradict something you have said yourself in front of the whole nation, then that is akin to misconduct. Then the question arises if he has the mental capacity to serve as the president. These questions may arise, he has created the scope for that.” He also said that if the president remains adamant about his statement, the advisory council of the interim government will discuss in a meeting whether Shahabuddin is qualified to remain in the position of president.

In response to the question of whether the resignation letter is with the government, Asif Nazrul clarified: “The resignation was supposed to be submitted to the president. It should be

meeting was held at a time when debate and speculations are swirling over President Mohammed Shahabuddin’s recent remarks on former prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s resignation.

Asif Nazrul Avoids Questions On Meeting With CJ Amid Calls For President’s Resignation

Law Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul avoided questions from journalists on October 23 about his recent meeting with the chief justice.

While visiting the International Crimes Tribunal, when reporters inquired about the meeting, the adviser declined to comment, saying: “I cannot speak every day. We are here



Interim Government Law Adviser, Dr. Asif Nazrul

in the president’s office, and under the Constitution of Bangladesh, there is no room to raise this issue in court. If he now says there is no resignation letter, you should ask him what he did with it.”

Chief Justice Holds Meeting With Asif Nazrul, Nahid

Two advisers of the interim government held a closed-door meeting with Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed at the latter’s Supreme Court office on October 22.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul and Information Adviser Nahid Islam joined the meeting, SC sources said. The

to review the tribunal’s progress. The work is going well, and we hope the building’s operations will begin by November 3 or 4.” When pressed further about the meeting with the chief justice, he responded: “No, I will not talk about that. I am busy.”

The meeting, attended by Dr Nazrul and Nahid, lasted around 40 minutes, but details of the discussion remain undisclosed.

BNP Warns Against Any Constitutional, Political Crisis

BNP has urged everyone to remain alert as the dictatorship and its allies are attempting to create a constitutional

and political crisis in the country. They said this in a briefing on October 23 after a three-member delegation of BNP met Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus at state guest house Jamuna. BNP Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan emphasised the need for a strong unity among all political parties, organisations representing various classes and professions, as well as student and youth groups. So that no one can somehow create a new constitutional crisis or political crisis in the country, everyone should be alert in this regard. Nazrul emphasised the need to strengthen national unity to safeguard the country's hard-earned democracy and freedom, which was achieved through bloodshed and prolonged struggle. "We need to build a national unity of all political parties, students, and people from all professions. Everyone must remain vigilant to prevent any attempts to create a crisis," he

cal parties and various organisations," he added. Pointing to the Awami League and its allied parties, Nazrul Islam Khan said that fallen fascism and their allies are trying to create a political and constitutional crisis in the country through various strategies. "We think that we need to strengthen our national unity to protect the changes we have achieved after a long struggle and to restore democracy." Party's Standing Committee members Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Salahuddin Ahmed were also present at this time. The BNP leader said they are continuing the political dialogue with the head of the interim government. He said the existing political situation of the country was discussed in the meeting. The BNP leader further said: "The reforms that are going on to prepare the field of elections for the purpose of restoring democracy, we are discussing the establishment of people's government

at this time, as it could delay the transition to democracy and the upcoming parliamentary elections. Salahuddin further said the vacancy in the post of president will create a state and constitutional crisis which will hinder the transition of democracy in the country. "So, everyone has to be alert so that the allies of fascism can't make any conspiracy."

Student Leaders Hold Meeting With BNP

A delegation of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and the National Citizens' Committee has held a meeting with BNP leaders, including Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, as part of efforts to build consensus for the removal of President Mohammed Shahabuddin. The meeting took place at the BNP Chairperson's office in Gulshan, Dhaka on October 26. Alongside the Secretary General, BNP's Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed and Joint Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie were also present. Anti-Discrimination Student Movement Convener Hasnat Abdullah, Spokesperson Umama Fatema and Chief Organiser Abdul Hannan Masud, along with National Citizens' Committee Convener Nasiruddin Patoari and Spokesperson Samantha Sharmin, as well as Akhter Hossain, were present. The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and the National Citizens' Committee took the initiative to discuss the removal of the president with the BNP in order to build national unity among political parties. The student leaders of the movement and the citizens' committee are determined to exert pressure on the interim government to facilitate the removal of Shahabuddin from the presidency.

Student Leaders Meet Political Parties

Leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and like-minded platform the Jatiya Nagorik Committee have started meeting with political



BNP leaders speak to the media after a meeting with the Chief Adviser of the interim government Dr Muhammad Yunus at State Guest House Jamuna, October 23, 2024

added. He also called for reforms to be carried out swiftly and through consensus. "The main goal now is to swiftly conclude the people's movement and establish democracy. We have discussed these issues," he said. Nazrul said the chief adviser urged the politicians to be careful so that no one can create a constitutional and political crisis in the country. "We will collectively confront pro-democracy politi-

through elections on the basis of consensus and quickly completed. People's demands, resolution of ongoing crises, the main aspiration of this movement is to restore democracy."

No Demand For President's Removal

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the BNP does not want the removal of the president

parties to build consensus on removing President Mohammed Shahabuddin from office. So far, the two organisations have held separate meetings with leaders of the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB). On October 26, the student leaders held additional meetings with the Jatiya Party, Gono Odhikar Parishad, Ganatantra Mancha, and the 12-party alliance to discuss the same agenda. Discussions around removing President Shahabuddin have sparked significant divisions among political parties. Hasnat Abdullah, the convener of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, said during their meeting with Jamaat and IAB, the groups reached an understanding on several points. He said Jamaat had agreed that the president lacks the moral standing to continue in his role.

On October 26, leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee met with Mirza Fakhru to discuss their demand for the president's removal. Although the BNP expressed no support for President Shahabuddin, they raised concerns about the potential consequences of his removal and the underlying motivations for it. In the meeting, Hasnat Abdullah confirmed that discussions included national unity, the concept of a Second Republic, and a new political system. The BNP said it would review these topics internally before offering an official position. When asked about BNP's stance on the president's removal, party leaders indicated that the issue would be deliberated within BNP's highest forum, with a final position to be announced afterwards. The party noted that a presidential vacancy could lead to a constitutional and political crisis, which they wish to avoid.

The BNP leaders clarified that they are advancing these discussions in stages and will soon finalise their position. Mirza Fakhru emphasised the need for electoral reforms to address the presidential issue, calling for an impartial election and swift election-centric

reforms. While the primary topic with student leaders focused on the president's removal, they also discussed broader issues concerning the political landscape, upcoming national elections, and the constitutional role of political parties. Mirza Fakhru said: "We continue to advocate for timely elections and the transfer of power to a constitutionally valid political entity." BNP Standing Committee member

met with Jamaat leaders on October 25. Jamaat's Secretary General Mia Ghulam Parwar, Nayeb-e-Ameer Dr Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, and Assistant Secretary General AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad attended this meeting. Student leaders said these discussions aim to avoid any potential crises and explore pathways to strengthen national unity. Hasnat Abdullah remarked: "We are continu-



Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr. Shafiqur Rahman on 25 October 2024, speaking at the Rukan (Members) Council of the Jamaat-e-Islami Gazipur district unit

Salahuddin Ahmed and Joint Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie were also present at the meeting with students. Despite these talks, the student leaders and the citizens committee remain firm in their demand, aiming to increase pressure on the interim government to remove the press. Muhammad Nasiruddin Patwari, Convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said: "The President must be removed. However, we have not set a deadline. National unity remains essential to meet the people's expectations."

Jamaat Prioritises Unity

According to Jamaat sources, the party has agreed in principle with the student leaders' call for the president's removal but supports its implementation based on political consensus. Apart from Sarjis Alam, the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement leaders who met with the BNP also

ously engaging with prominent political parties that have historically participated in popular uprisings."

Meanwhile, the government's Advisory Council is also examining the issue. Following protests by some small groups outside Bangabhaban for two days, Adviser Md Nahid Islam said they would build for political consensus and asked people to call off protests.

Although student leaders are ramping up the pressure, the government is cautious, believing that unilateral decisions outside political consensus could increase complications. Consequently, the Advisory Council has opted to seek a resolution through cooperation with political parties. ■



BB To Start Assessing Quality Of Banks' Assets Next Month

Business Outlook Report

Bangladesh Bank is set to start assessing the quality of banks' assets next month to know the overall situation of the sector, in a prelude to comprehensive reforms. "We may start the assessment phase from November," BB Governor Dr Ahsan H. Mansur told a press conference at the office of the Alternate Executive Director (AED) for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka at the World Bank Group in Washington, USA, on October 22.

He is now in Washington to attend the Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group as a member of the Bangladesh delegation, headed by Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed. The adviser also spoke at the event. "We discussed with the World Bank the banking-sector

reforms. The roadmap has been chalked out. We will do asset evaluation with an international auditor," Dr Mansur said in reply to a question. "We will find out the loss of the banks and assess damages, capital shortfalls, the need for recapitalisation ... These are issues of economic and political decision." The BB has formed a six-member taskforce to assess the existing financial situation, bad assets and major risks to maintain economic stability.

Besides, the taskforce will conduct financial-index review, assess actual conditions of the loans, actual price of assets, security-deposit deficiency and will separate the bad assets of banks concerned. The BB Governor said all parties at the Annual Meetings here are cooperating with Bangladesh in the matter of bring-

ing the laundered money back to the country and a due process in this regard got underway. "To implement this, we have to work with international organisations ... mainly we have to work bilaterally and that comes from the political sides," he said, adding that the Bangladesh delegation is expected to hold a meeting with all concerned on October 26 to fine tune the strategy.

The Governor, appointed after the August-5th student-mass uprising, exudes hopes that Bangladesh would do better than Sri Lanka--the island country that also rebounds from an economic crisis and overthrow of government in a mass upsurge. "We have not become like Sri Lanka, nor will we." ■

RMG Sector Embraces Automation Will Workers Be Left Behind?



Business Outlook Report

As 80% of garment factory owners in Bangladesh plan to invest in automated technologies in the next two years to cope up with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and enhance the industry's global competitiveness, proactive steps are necessary to support ready-made garment (RMG) factory workers who are at risk of unemployment, said people involved in this sector.

Embracing automation allows the industry to

meet increasing demand for high-quality products with shorter lead times, which is critical for international buyers, said industry insiders as well as researchers.

They also said advanced technologies can significantly boost productivity, improve quality control, and lower operational costs, ensuring that Bangladesh's RMG sector maintains its competitive edge internationally. LightCastle Partners, a consulting firm, said automation in this sector is expected to grow by

over 13% in the next two years as 80% of garment factory owners in Bangladesh plan to invest in automatic machines. Despite the increase in efficiency and projected production increases of up to 22%, concerns about rising unemployment persist. Out of an average of 2,250 workers per factory, only 500 are expected to be directly involved with automation processes, leaving many workers at risk, said sources.

**Safeguarding
Workers** **RMG
Through**

Upskilling And Reskilling

Zahedul Amin, co-founder and director of LightCastle Partners, highlighted the need for a balanced approach that supports the RMG industry's competitiveness through automation while safeguarding the workforce through upskilling and reskilling initiatives. He emphasised the need for urgent action to address the potential impacts of automation on the workforce, calling for initiatives that ensure sustainable growth while protecting the livelihoods

of garment workers. Zahedul shared findings from a recent research that showed 93% of garment factory operators in Bangladesh are willing to work with automated technologies, with 70% of female workers expressing interest in gaining new skills for operating modern machinery.

Chairman of Policy Exchange Bangladesh Dr M Masrur Reaz highlighted a range of strategies for ensuring the RMG sector's resilience in the face of technological changes, including prioritising the procurement of updated technologies, enhancing occupational safety, and implementing upskilling and reskilling programmes to transition workers into new roles. He emphasised the importance of integrating circular economy principles to reduce carbon emissions and implementing strategies to ensure long-term security for those affected by automation. These initiatives are essential in protecting workers and helping Bangladesh continue its growth as a leading global exporter of ready-made garments.

The country's per-worker labour productivity level is 9.2%, says APO. From 2015-2020, Bangladesh's labour productivity grew at an average rate of 5.1%, matching China's growth. In 2019-2020, Bangladesh's productivity growth fell to 2.2%, while Vietnam's reached 4.4%. Vietnam achieved higher productivity by taking steps to upskill its labour

force and integrating automation. Automation will increase by 13% over the next two years, with each machine potentially displacing one-six workers, according to Light-Castle. According to data from the Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh ranks second globally in

producing high-end products as well. However, we focus on upskilling and reskilling RMG workers," he also said. Mohiuddin, also additional managing director of Denim Expert Limited, noted that international business depends on technology. So, they have

Experts recommended collaborating and formulating policies with financial institutions to offer specialised loans or credit lines for automation investments, and implementing policy incentives to upskill and reskill workers to up tier and prepare them. Collabora-



RMG. In FY23, Bangladesh exported garments worth \$47 billion. The RMG sector contributed 10.35% to the country's GDP in 2023, employing 4.1 million workers, 60% of whom are women.

Bangladesh Priorities Green Factories, Automation

Immediate past director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Mohiuddin Rubel said they are leaning toward both green factories and automation to compete in the global market. "There is no alternative way to prioritise it. Bangladesh is now top in green factories in the globe. We are

to think about all matters including products, price and services to attract international buyers as there are many countries in the business.

Challenges To Adoption And Its Underlying Impact

Automation is slowly replacing workers due to their lack of technological knowledge. Women workers are particularly vulnerable to automation due to their limited exposure to technical skills and training opportunities. Due to lack of training facilities, workers look for alternatives in RMG. Factory management claims that turnover reaches around 10% during festival holidays.

tion and loan support to accelerate circular and green practices, and engaging in international lobbying efforts to secure improved negotiation terms for maintaining trade benefits are also needed, they stated.

The researchers highlighted that the updated technology in RMG can improve efficiency, safety, and working conditions. Circularity encompasses sustainable practices to minimise GHG emissions and mitigate hazardous labour conditions, and access to pension schemes for RMG workers will ensure financial stability during their retirement period. ■

HIGH-INTEREST LOANS SQUEEZE BUSINESSES



Businesses Worried As Interest Rates Keep Rising

Business Outlook Report

The Bangladesh Bank has taken initiatives, including raising the policy interest rate, to restrict the flow of money in the market to tame inflation that has been raging the country's economy for the last couple of years.

While the measures are necessary to ease the inflationary pressure, it has been driving up the cost of doing business, making it difficult or untenable for the entrepreneurs to make new investments or expand old operations. The policy interest rate has been increased five times this year, hiking the cost of loans for consumers and decreasing credit flow in the private sector. A year ago, the maximum interest rate on bank loans was 9%, which currently hovers around 16%. The average

loan interest rate across all banks is also steadily increasing. According to the Bangladesh Bank data, the average bank loan interest rate was 7.83% in September last year, which rose to 11.57% by August this year. One of the primary policy interest rates in the country is the Repurchase Agreement or Repo Rate – the rate at which the Bangladesh Bank provides short-term loans to commercial banks.

On October 22, the repo rate was increased by 50 basis points, bringing it to 10%. Just a month earlier, on 24 September, it was raised to 9.50%. On 25 August, it was increased by 50 basis points to 9%. Earlier, on 8 May this year, the repo rate was hiked by 50 basis points, and on 17 January, it was raised by 25 basis points. The rise in policy

interest rates is directly reflected in higher loan interest rates at the consumer level. Business owners are getting increasingly concerned about the continuous rise in interest rates. They point out that this has been adding to their cost of operation, which already soared under the recently ousted fascist regime as the autocratic Awami League increased the prices of gas and electricity repeatedly. At the same time, entrepreneurs also had to increase workers' wages and benefits, without which they could not cope up with the skyrocketing commodity prices.

However, global prices of export products, including ready-made garments, have not increased proportionately. In such circumstances, further increases in interest rates will make it difficult for

businesses to repay loans, leading many to become defaulters. Mohammad Hatem, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said that, “If interest rates continue to rise like this, investments will come to a halt. Those who previously took loans at 8% to 9% interest will struggle under the burden of debt and become defaulters. Simply put, an increase in interest rates means strangling businesses to death.”

Shams Mahmud, president of the Bangladesh-Thai Chamber of Com-

electricity shortages. In such an adverse reality, the industrial sector cannot bear any additional crises. Inflation in the country has hovered around 10% for over two years, and economists don't expect it to decrease soon. In July, inflation reached 11.66%, which slightly decreased to 10.49% in August, 9.92% in September, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

To tackle inflation, the central bank has lowered the private sector credit growth target for the July-December period of FY25 to 9.8%, down from January-June's 10%. The

Analysts said Bangladesh's situation is somewhat different in this regard. Despite global interest rate hikes, Bangladesh capped lending rates at 9%. Similarly, the dollar exchange rate was kept artificially fixed at Tk85 for a long time. These flawed policies have caused significant damage to the economy.

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said, “We cannot compare our economy with others'. The decision to increase interest rates is appropriate for now, given the current liquidity crisis and



merce and Industry, said, “We always want to take some policies to tame inflation. Business costs will drop if inflation is under control. However, interest rates continue to rise, almost halting business expansion and putting the ongoing operations under pressure. If this situation persists, it will negatively affect the overall stability of the macroeconomy.”

A number of SME entrepreneurs said that they do not stand a chance of surviving with loans at 15% or 16% interest. Besides, access to fair credit is becoming difficult. Industries are also struggling with gas and

Bangladesh Bank's latest data showed that the growth dropped to 9.86% in August from 10.13% in July. Husne Ara Shikha, spokesperson and executive director of the Bangladesh Bank, said, “There is no alternative to increasing policy interest rates to control inflation. The rising interest rates may increase business costs, but the rates will be reduced once inflation declines.”

She also said, “When global interest rates were rising, we couldn't adjust ours for various reasons. Now, even though those countries are cutting their rates, we are unable to do so.”

the lack of significant investment demand.

“Additionally, many loans are not being repaid on time. Injecting more liquidity into the system without sufficient demand will only increase inflation, as one of the primary drivers of inflation is excessive money supply. Therefore, keeping money supply restricted will gradually bring down inflation.”

Average Loan Interest

According to the Bangladesh Bank, the average bank loan interest rate was 7.83% in September 2023. In

October, November and December that year, that rate was 7.89%, 7.99% and 9.36% respectively. In January this year, the rate was still at single digit – 9.75%. In February it crossed double digit and stood 10.05%. After that, in March, April, May, June and July the rate was 10.36%, 10.53%, 10.36%, 11.28% and 11.52% respectively. In August bank loan interest rate increased to 11.57%.

Bankers reveal that despite criticisms, the maximum lending rate was capped at 9% from April 2020 to June 2022. During this period, some businesses secured loans at 7% to 8% interest, while deposit rates ranged between 2% to 6%. However, inflation began to rise in early 2022, driven by increased demand in the post-COVID global economy and

the Russia-Ukraine war. In response, most countries raised their interest rates in phases. Typically, investments in dollars yield 2%-3% interest in developed countries, but due to the global situation, US interest rates surged past 9%. In comparison, Bangladesh's average lending rate in September last year was 7.83%, making the dollar more attractive than the taka. Consequently, many investors shifted their funds to dollars.

During this time, oversight and regulatory measures in Bangladesh were weak. Some borrowers took advantage of the low-interest loans to illegally transfer money abroad, but there was little accountability. This dual pressure—capital outflow to foreign currencies and a shortage of both taka and dollars—placed

significant strain on the economy.

Policy Rates In Other Countries

Bangladesh is raising interest rates at a time when countries like the US, Canada, the UK, and China are lowering theirs due to easing inflation. On 18 September, the US Federal Reserve cut its policy interest rate by 50 basis points, bringing it within the range of 4.75% to 5%. The European Central Bank also reduced its rate by 25 basis points. Canada's central bank has already reduced rates three times this year, and the Bank of England recently lowered its interest rate from 5.25% percent to 5%. Over the past two years, many countries raised their policy rates to tackle inflation and succeeded in doing so, thanks to stable demand and supply management. ■

NBR Working With Other Agencies To Bring Lost Revenue Back Into National Coffers



Business Outlook Report

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is prioritizing the recovery of lost or foregone revenue, according to NBR Chairman Md Abdur Rahman Khan. He emphasized that bringing this revenue back into the national exchequer is the

agency's primary focus. "It is actually our main job, and we are actively working in that direction," said Khan during a press briefing at the NBR conference room on October 23. He reiterated the agency's commitment to addressing the issue, noting that significant efforts are underway.

Foregone revenue refers to the money an agency expects to collect but loses due to external factors or events. The NBR Chairman mentioned that the process of discussing and addressing lost revenue is handled through a forum that operates behind the scenes and is not visible to the public. "We are working in an integrated and coordinated manner," Khan said, highlighting the collaborative approach NBR takes with other government bodies. He pointed out that the NBR is working closely with agencies such as the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) and law enforcement agencies to address the issue. "You might not notice the process, but when results start becoming public, when the recovery process reaches a certain stage, you will be able to realize the impact," Khan added, assuring that the NBR's efforts will soon yield tangible outcomes. ■

Slow Investment, Liquidity Crisis Affects Pvt Sector Credit Growth

Business Outlook Report

P rivate sector credit growth in Bangladesh dipped in August compared with that in the previous month, amid slow business investment, liquidity crisis in banks, and overall political unrest.

Economic challenges such as high inflation, foreign exchange volatility, dollar shortage, and an energy crisis have further dampened business activities, making businesses hesitant to seek bank loans. Bangladesh Bank's latest data showed that the growth dropped to 9.86% in August from 10.13% in

July. However, it still remains high as per target set by central banks for first half (H1) of FY25 (July-December) to 9.80%. Data shows August's credit growth was the lowest in the last 11 months. Earlier in September 2023, the growth was 9.69%.

The rate was 9.84% in June, 10.35% in May, up from 9.9% in April, which was 10.49% in March, 9.96% in February, 9.95% in January and 10.2% in December of 2023.

Reason Behind Slow Growth

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director &

CEO of Mutual Trust Bank Limited (MTB), considers political unrest to be the reason for the decrease in the opening of LCs.

He said: "Import LC opening has decreased due to two reasons. First due to the recent political unrest in the country. Then there was a disruption in the communication system. Banks were also closed at that time. It has directly affected import and export. The internet shutdown also disrupted communication across the country, affecting direct imports. As a result, the demand for credit in the private sector

was low. Hence, private sector credit growth slowed in August." The banker talked about the reluctance of investors as the second reason for LC openings declining. Economists and bankers also said that the private sector credit growth declined in August due to stagnant business activities amid major political changes and unrest across the country.

The unrest began in July, with business disruptions stemming from curfews, protests, and an internet blackout. Protests were led by the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement, which began on





July 1 and ended on August 5 when Sheikh Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled to India on August 5. In August, tensions continued amid the formation of an interim government, violence and sweeping changes in different administrative bodies.

The domino effect from the political unrest spilled over to economic activities which remained almost at a standstill during most parts of that month. As part of the private sector entrepreneurs' cautious business approach following the regime change, they more or less halted their

business expansion plan to avert any further investment woes, sources said. Apart from the chaos associated with the changeover in state power, the latest event of flooding that inundated major parts of the country's southeastern regions also forced the private-sector players to be watchful before putting in any further capital investment. Therefore, credit demands declined as businesses took a wait-and-see policy, bankers said.

Moreover, the liquidity crisis worsened in the banking sector which saw massive loan scandals and

irregularities during the Awami League regime, they said. Many people withdrew their deposits amid fear of losing their money, bankers said. Therefore, money in circulation soared to Tk292,000 crore in August from Tk250,000 crore in the same month in 2023. In addition, the banking sector's loan disbursement capacity also diminished due to high amounts of defaulted loans, deposit withdrawals by clients and ongoing economic challenges, bankers said.

Many banks are now facing a cash crisis and have sought assistance

from the central bank and larger banks to meet their daily cash needs, they said. According to Bangladesh Bank data, deposits (excluding interbank and government deposits) fell to Tk1,731,260 crore in August, down from Tk1,734,026 crore in July and Tk1,742,224 crore in June. On the other hand, the central bank's contractionary monetary policy also weighed heavily on the private sector credit growth. It raised the policy rate to 9.5% to make the money more expensive in a bid to control inflation.

A dollar shortage in the country has curtailed business operations and reduced the demand for credit, the official exchange rate reached Tk118 from Tk93 against the US dollar within a year.

MPS Target

The central bank has lowered the private sector credit growth target for the July-December period (H1) of FY25 to 9.8%, down from January-June's 10% to reduce the credit flow for tackling inflation. The private sector credit growth target was at 10.90% for FY24 FY24 H1 (July-December). However, the actual growth till June of last fiscal year stood at 9.8%.

On the other hand, projected growth in public sector credit is 14.2%, as per the Bangladesh Bank monetary policy statement (MPS) for the first half of FY25. ■

Universal Pension Scheme: A Flawed AL Legacy



Apu Ahmed

The Universal Pension Scheme (UPS), introduced by the fallen Awami League government in August 2023, has faced significant challenges and criticism since its inception. Although the ousted government tried to portray it as a progressive step towards retirement security, the UPS has struggled to gain traction among the people.

GPI Yet To Include Bangladesh Pension System

Besides, the UPS has yet to be included in the Mercer CFA Institute Global Pension Index, a well-known annual update on retirement income systems in major countries across the world. However, the omission is largely due to the scheme's nascent stage and the ongoing coexistence of the traditional non-contributory pension system for public servants. Anyway, the latest

update of the Mercer CFA Institute Global Pension Index released in July 2024 by the global association of investment professionals evaluated 48 retirement income systems, representing 65 per cent of the global population. It uses three sub-indices -- adequacy, sustainability and integrity -- to assess each system. The overall index is based on a weighted average: adequacy at 40%, sustainability at 35% and integrity at 25%.

Netherlands Scores Highest, US Modest, India Lowly

The 14 Asia Pacific countries' economies showed a score above 35, a threshold where a score lower would indicate serious deficiencies. Systems scoring between 35 and 50, classified as D grade, show some positive aspects but also major weaknesses, often reflecting early stages of development. Singapore, the highest in the region

with 78.7 points, has been put under the A-grade system. This was followed by New Zealand (68.7) and Hong Kong (63.9). Meanwhile, India and the Philippines scored lowest with 44.0 and 45.8, respectively. The Netherlands, Iceland, Denmark and Israel ranked highest overall, all receiving an A grade. The USA had a score of 63.0 in 2023, ranking 22nd out of 47 pension systems under the category of C+. The US retirement income system includes Social Security and has voluntary private pensions, which can be occupational or personal.

UPS Struggling From Very Beginning

Other than the new in nature, the universal pension scheme introduced in Bangladesh under the National Pension Authority has yet to earn the confidence of the majority population. The pension authority has been

struggling to popularise the system. It has been facing criticisms from the very beginning for introducing four instruments hurriedly and without any proper feasibility study. Now it is facing the backlash for immature exercises of a very sensitive issue that was conceived in around 2012 after the Awami League won a landslide victory in the general election in 2009 under the military-backed caretaker government. However, the concept under the Ministry of Finance, led by then finance minister AMA Muhith, was revealed in the public sphere for the

years of the long 15 years of rule toppled by a mass uprising on August 5. Anyway, the introduction of the universal pension scheme was a last-ditch attempt by the AL regime to increase the government income after it failed to increase tax revenue and almost exhausted a non-traditional tool of absorbing idle money of the state-owned entrepreneurs and autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies. While introducing the much-talked-about scheme, then-finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal gave the impression that they would receive

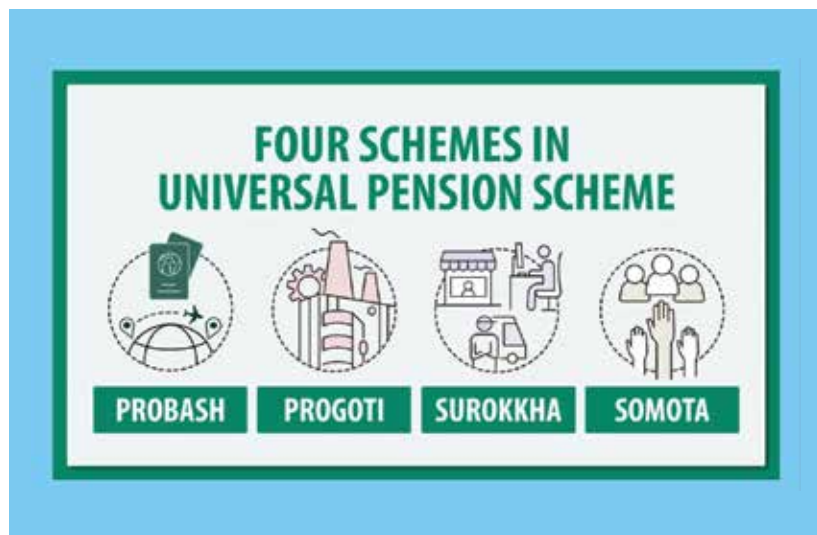
was dealt with a huge blow against the backdrop of a growing number of policyholders becoming dormant and the new enrolments dropped to just 10-20 daily during the August-September period. Until July, the pension authority could invest around Tk 125 crore of the money to buy government treasury bonds from the premiums, but the growing dormant policyholders have led to a dry-up of the income-generating source.

Pension Authority Faces Backlashes

On September 18, the national pension authority, a body under the finance ministry, calculated the total number of policyholders under its four schemes at 3,72,168. On October 9, the overall number rose to 3,72,371, showing that only around 10 on average per day joined the schemes over the past 22 days. The pension authority is now trying to convince the interim government about the necessity of the continuation of its operation. The presence of a universal pension scheme is imperative to replace the present system for public officials. The allocations for pension and gratuity benefits for public officials grew more than tripled in the national budget -- for FY25 Tk 39,419 crore has been projected that was Tk 11,913 crore in FY14 -- mounting pressure on fiscal management. However, general people will face a lack of confidence as long as the existing pension scheme meant for public servants remains in place. Besides, the instruments should be changed to make it people-friendly.

AL Had Other Thought

After all, the previous regime that was called fascist at home and abroad had no intention to benefit people with the policy. It has been proved that the AL's aims were to generate incomes at the expense of the general people and kept continuing its operation of transferring public funds to its oligarchs by running controversial policies like power production under rental power plants, awarding unsolicited deals and implementing politically motivated projects. ■



first time on June 1, 2017, with the disclosure that the government was working towards introducing a participatory universal pension system for all through reforming the existing one meant for a few pensioners. Almost one year later, he said the government had planned to introduce a 'universal pension scheme' for all working people engaged in the private sector, both in formal and non-formal areas after a pilot programme.

No Pilot Project Taken

However, no pilot programme was taken before it was eventually introduced in August 2023 amid the deepening financial crises caused by the shortage of dollars. Besides, the falling revenue against the growing expenses narrowed the fiscal manoeuvring by the AL regime in its last two

overwhelming responses from the citizens in and outside the country. However, surprises were stored for the national pension authority as the lukewarm responses caused a major concern for them.

Forceful Enlistment

To popularise the instruments, the AL government engaged its political cadres and the public administration at the district level forcing general people to be enlisted in the new system by paying a monthly premium. However, the forced inclusion of policyholders backfired after the fall of the AL regime with the escape of its chief Sheikh Hasina to India. The pension authority, which was forced to scrap a newly introduced scheme Prattay because of protests by university teachers just two days before the fall of the AL regime,



Interim Govt's Economic Initiatives Show Positive Results

Business Outlook Report

The country is witnessing the impacts of initiatives taken by the interim government within two months of taking office, including increased flow of remittance, improved foreign exchange reserves, reduced fuel prices and accessible loans for export industry workers, according to the International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICCB).

The chamber made the remarks in its editorial of the current News Bulletin (Jul-Sep. 2024) released on October 23. "Steps taken to stabilise bank operations and foster economic stability, forming a high-level task force to recover laundered

money, creating six commissions, and taking the initiative to issue a White Paper on the economic condition are also notable," the ICCB said in its editorial. "Bangladesh Bank's efforts to boost credit flow to the export sector and ease import restrictions are commendable," ICCB said.

It mentioned that businesses emphasised the urgent need to address various issues, particularly the law and order situation in the country. Despite government efforts, including deploying armed forces, some miscreants continue to instigate unrest, affecting industries, especially the readymade garment (RMG) sector. Although all demands of RMG workers have

recently been accepted, industrial areas still face disruptions due to outsiders causing disorder, said ICCB. According to the chamber, these offenders have engaged in robbery, vandalism, arson, and looting, resulting in damages exceeding Tk 5,000 crores as estimated by the businesses.

Besides, according to BGMEA, the garment industry has suffered a collective production loss of around US\$400 million. As the RMG sector is crucial to our export earnings, ensuring uninterrupted operations and taking comprehensive measures to stabilise the garment industry is vital, said ICCB. It said the current law and order issues have led to

adverse reactions from international brands and buyers, raising concerns about future orders. It is crucial to devise a strategy to rebuild relationships with key export markets and importers urgently. The global business entity praised the Anti-discrimination Students' Movement, which ultimately contributed to the end of the 15-year Awami League regime and unfolded a new chapter of democracy and good governance.

This achievement, showcasing the solidarity, strength, and determination to uphold the rights of students and the people, serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of collective action, even in the face of significant challenges, it added. ■



supporting Bangladesh's energy security for nearly 30 years

Chevron is the largest producer of natural gas in Bangladesh. We produce over 60% of the country's natural gas demand and over 80% of condensate in the country. We are proud to work with Petrobangla and the Government of Bangladesh to support the country's energy security.

Learn more at <https://bangladesh.chevron.com>





Interim Government Faces Flak For Egg Price Volatility

Apu Ahmed

The recent volatility in the prices of eggs has exposed the interim government to criticism. This is not expected as the people do not want to see a repetition of complete failure of management in prices of essentials, which was a common phenomenon mostly in the last two years of the long 15-year regime of the Awami League.

Price Hikes Of Essentials In AL Regime

Price hikes of essentials that kept the consumer price index, well known as a measurement of inflation, at a decade high throughout 2022 and 2023 became one of the major reasons for the unpopularity of the previous AL government and its eventual fall in the face of a mass uprising. The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, assumed power on August 8 after AL chief Sheikh Hasina escaped to India on

August 5 in the face of the student-led mass uprising. The majority of people welcomed the changes in power with the expectation that oligarchs of the AL government manipulating essential products to bank loans would be checked.

Egg Price Hits New Record

The interim government has shown initial successes in breaking the monopoly in the country's banking sector, but its less-than-expected focus on the market of essentials caused price hikes for many essentials, especially eggs, which has turned out to be a sensitive daily essential item for the past several years with the rise of the poultry sector, aided by chicks' breeders and feed producers and extended by fast food shops and bakery items. So, the volatility in the prices of the item disappointed the consumers. The price of a dozen eggs raced to Tk 190, recording an increase of around 26 per

cent in the last week of August. According to data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, the sudden increase in egg prices has surpassed its previous record made almost three years ago.

50 Per Cent Price Hike On Fuel Oil Rise

The price of a quartet of eggs reached Tk 60 against the backdrop of a hike in the price of fuel oil by around 50 per cent on August 5, 2022. There had been apprehensions that the fuel price hikes would push up the rate of inflation after it reached over 7 per cent in June and July 2022, already a nine-year high. However, the price hike of an egg by 28 per cent in just one month and 54 per cent in one year in 2022 surprised all. Even some experts who are now holding important positions in the government blamed the presence of market manipulators and the lack of proper market

monitoring for the price hike. Besides, they had also blamed the inadequate supply situation.

Steps Taken

The latest price hike of eggs has not only disappointed the people but also made them critical of the government agencies and their failure to check the price volatility. Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed who is also in charge of the commerce ministry held a number of meetings with stakeholders and also visited Karwan Bazar, one of the city's key trading points, on October 15 to assess the market situation. Within two days, he directed the National Board of Revenue to cut import duties on essentials, including eggs. The NBR drastically cut import duty on eggs from existing 25 per cent to 5 per cent. The duty cut would reduce import costs of eggs by Tk 13.8 per dozen, making the country's cheapest source of protein affordable for the commoners. The reduced import tax for eggs will be valid until December 31 this year.

Egg Imports

The move has caused a marginal decline in the price of eggs as the wholesalers resumed supply after keeping sales suspended amid fears of facing fines by the government's market monitoring teams. Besides, corporate businesses and farmers agreed to supply eggs directly to the wholesalers in the capital at a reasonable price set by the government. Md Alim Akhter Khan, director general of the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection announced the step at a press conference after a meeting with the egg producers, suppliers and other stakeholders at its head office in the capital's Karwan Bazar. He said the wholesalers agreed to the government's pricing and they want to buy eggs from the producers at the government-fixed rate. The move has been taken on an experimental basis to check manipulation by the wholesalers. By this time, the Ministry of Commerce has approved the import of 4 crore more eggs to increase supply

and make the market stable. A dozen of traders have been given permission by the ministry's trade-1 wing on October 23 to import eggs. The import of eggs and the import permit will remain valid till December 31. Earlier, the ministry allowed seven designated firms to import 4.05 crore eggs on October 8.

Rise In Egg Imports

According to Volza's Bangladesh Import data, the country imported 484 shipments of eggs from March 2023 to February 2024. These imports were supplied by 229 foreign exporters to 265 Bangladesh buyers, marking a



growth rate of 22 per cent compared to the preceding 12 months. Within this period, in February 2024 alone, Bangladesh imported 38 egg shipments. This marks a year-on-year growth of 19% compared to February 2023. Bangladesh imports most of its eggs from India, China and Vietnam. The actions and efforts taken by the interim government in the past one month suggested that it is trying to improve the supply situation of essentials and strengthen the market monitoring.

Govt Should Check Data Mismatch

Both issues are essential but a move should also be taken to clear confusion over the supply-demand situation. The demand for eggs has increased while its daily production has declined by

approximately 50 lakh pieces due to severe flooding that has affected poultry farms in the southeastern region in the current calendar year. As the market instability persisted for over a month, the Department of Agricultural Marketing set the price of each egg at Tk11.87. However, despite the effort, the market remained uncontrolled. Consumers still have to pay Tk14 or more per egg, retailers say. According to data from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the current daily demand for eggs in Bangladesh is 5 crore. However, according to the Bangladesh Poultry Industries Central Council,

egg production stands at 4.5 crore. Due to the reduction in 50 lakh eggs in production caused by flooding in the southeastern region, the daily production has now dropped to 4 crore.

Ensuring Fair Prices For Chicks, Feed

Efforts should also be focused on ensuring the fair price of one-day chicks and poultry feed. Like the eggs and meat under the poultry industry, the one-day chicks and feed markets have grown big and surpassed over a billion dollars in annual sales shared by a few breeders and a handful of companies. The interim government should conduct a thorough audit of the companies by the competitive commission to see how these companies affect the sector. ■

Bangladesh Bank Expands Inflation Battle With Rate Hike



Business Outlook Report

The central bank raised the key policy rate by 50 basis points to 10 percent yesterday, making borrowing costlier for the 11th consecutive time to tame inflation as spiralling prices remain a headache for the interim government.

The overnight repurchase agreement (repo) rate has exceeded the inflation rate for the first time in many years in Bangladesh in one of the most significant steps taken since Ahsan H Mansur took over as governor in August. This is the third repo rate hike after Mansur's appointment. Even before taking up the role of governor, Mansur emphasised that the policy rate must be

increased to a double-digit figure to control inflationary pressure by effectively tightening the money flow. As Bangladesh Bank has remained firm on its contractionary monetary policy, analysts say higher borrowing costs can help reduce inflation by cooling down demand in the economy.

Banks will face higher costs while borrowing from the central bank, a possible scenario that typically leads to higher interest rates on loans for businesses and consumers. While the rate hike is necessary to reduce the overall money supply in the economy to rein in runaway consumer prices, businesses may delay or

reduce investments, and consumers may cut back on spending. This can slow down economic growth in the short term. Bangladesh has been hiking the policy rate since May 2022, stepping up efforts to curb inflationary pressure, but the real policy rate, adjusted for inflation, remained negative.

The central bank in its latest move also raised the standing lending facility rate by 50 basis points to 11.50 percent and the standing deposit facility rate to 8.50 percent from 8 percent. The new rates will be effective from October 27. Despite a slight ease in consumer prices to 9.92 percent in September from 10.49 percent in August, inflation remains a

significant concern, particularly for lower- and fixed-income households. A recent report by Bangladesh Bank indicates that domestic products are the primary drivers of inflation, accounting for 74 percent of the overall inflation rate in September. This is a notable increase from 61 percent in June, highlighting the growing influence of local factors on price levels.

The contribution of import-dependent items to inflation has declined from 39 percent in June to 26 percent in September.

Not The Only Solution

Experts said that while raising policy rates is a critical tool in controlling

inflation, it is not the only solution. Other factors must be addressed concurrently for effective alleviation of inflationary pressure. They also observed that comprehensive strategies, which deal with supply chain dynamics, production costs, and domestic market conditions, are essential for a holistic approach to managing inflation.

"Monetary policy alone is not enough to curb inflation," said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). "Because other factors are working in our country. Fiscal policy is very important here. Different costs of the mega projects such as operational costs and administrative costs are examples of overspending. We have to prioritise those things." Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute, said, "If we revisit how India and Sri Lanka have controlled inflation over the last two years, it is evident that they followed an orthodox monetary policy that relied on increasing policy rate to control their inflationary pressure – and it has worked."

"If we remain committed to a tight monetary policy and also parallelly commit to addressing disruptions in the supply chain of essential commodities, then I am cautiously optimistic that inflation will come down in the current fiscal year. "This should also create conducive conditions for broader macroeconomic stabilisation, which will benefit everyone in the medium term," Ashikur said. Monzur

Hossain, research director at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said: "I think it's going to be an ultra-tightened monetary policy. It will increase interest rates further, making investments costlier."

Solving demand-supply gaps, and reducing transportation costs and market mismanagement would also be needed to ease inflation, he said. "If other measures are not taken together, raising policy rates or interest rates would not be effective,

rather it would hurt growth momentum in the medium to long run," he added. Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development, said that although inflation was not decreasing much, there was no option but to increase the policy rate.

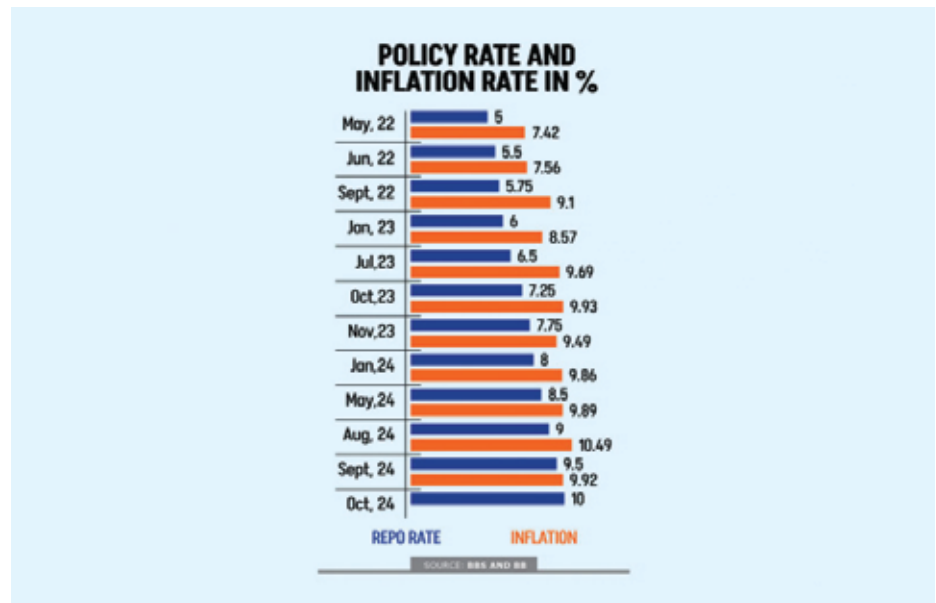
"Not only has the policy rate been increased, but fiscal policy adjustments have also been made. ADP spending has been cut. The central bank doesn't print money or

give loans to the government," he said. The researcher thinks it will take some time to get the outcome of these measures. He believes normalcy in the supply chain of essential commodities should be prioritised while keeping the policy rate high.

Recently, the government has lowered the import duty for some daily essential items, such as rice, wheat, and egg, and started selling some key commodities at subsidised rates. CPD's Fahmida called for lower tariffs on the

South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, said that the previous government did not raise the policy rate when it was crucial, contributing to prolonged high inflation.

He argued that simply increasing the policy rate will not suffice; it will take time to reduce inflation through this measure alone. To effectively tackle inflation, he said, ensuring a steady supply of essential commodities is critical. Raihan also said action



import of other essential commodities and measures to increase the supply of local products, stressing the need to curb market manipulation. The effectiveness of the Competition Commission must be enhanced along with the readjustment of trade policy, according to her.

She also emphasised accurate data on supply and demand, which she said is crucial for understanding market dynamics. Selim Raihan, executive director of the

should be taken to stop anti-competitive practices in the market.

"If the Bangladesh Bank, commerce, finance and food ministries, and the National Board of Revenue collaborate on a unified platform to tackle inflation, their efforts will be more impactful.

"Without this coordinated approach, combating inflation will remain a challenge," he said. ■



The 406th meeting of the Board of Directors of Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC was held on Monday, with its Chairman Khwaja Shahriar in the chair. The overall business performance of the bank was reviewed and several policy decisions were taken. ■



BEPZA signed an agreement with JIDALAI Co. Ltd. to this effect at BEPZA Complex, Dhaka. Member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA Md Ashraful Kabir and Managing Director of JIDALAI Co. Ltd Hsu, Hsueh-Min signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. Executive Chairman of BEPZA Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman witnessed the signing ceremony. ■



The 4th meeting of the Board of Directors of Shippers' Council of Bangladesh (SCB) for the term 2024-25 was held at its office at Dhanmondi in Dhaka, with its Chairman Md. Rezaul Karim in the chair. The meeting approved the minutes of the previous meeting & financial statement and also approved the donation to the Relief and Welfare Fund of the Chief Adviser of the interim government. The meeting also reviewed current problems and other issues related to trade and business. ■



The 884th meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) of Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC (SJIB PLC) was held at the Corporate Head Office of the bank. The meeting was presided over by Akkas Uddin Mollah, the Chairman of Executive Committee (EC) of the bank. The members of the committee discussed various issues related to investment in different sectors. ■



Omera LPG launched the country's most convenient home delivery platform for LPG cylinders, the LPG Solution app, at a programme marking the International Chef's Day 2024 at a hotel in Dhaka. This app enables customers to easily order LPG cylinders, ensuring hassle-free home delivery along with a range of support services, including kitchen setup and safety assistance. ■



Sadharan Bima Corporation and Sonali Bank PLC signed a payment gateway agreement. Under the agreement the Sonali Bank payment gateway will be used to collect insurance premiums and other fees and charges from insurance policyholders. Sadharan Bima General Manager Bibekananda Saha and Sonali Bank Deputy Managing Director Subhas Chandra Das were present among others at the agreement signing ceremony at the Sonali Bank head office. ■



BRAC Bank Reading Café of Chattogram has engaged in an analytical discussion of Harishankar Jaladas' book Astadoshi, while the Chuadanga chapter read Abu Ishaque's masterpiece Surja Dighal Bari. ■



Ashwani Nayar (Area General Manager, IHG, South West Asia and General Manager, InterContinental Dhaka) has been recognized as Asia's Best General Manager by CMO Asia and World Federation of Hospitality Professionals for his immense contribution in the Hospitality and Tourism industry. ■



Council Members of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries of Bangladesh (ICSB) led by its Senior Vice President M Nurul Alam called on Khondoker Rashed Maqsood, Chairman, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) at his office in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka. ■



Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) hosted a luncheon meeting at a city hotel. Adviser to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan was present as the chief guest. ■



Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) signed a tripartite agreement with WeGro and Syngenta to scale up lending to marginal farmers. Farmers will be allowed to borrow through the bank's mobile app to procure inputs from designated outlets of Syngenta for farming. This arrangement has been aimed at ensuring smooth funding support to boost up agricultural production. Md. Khalid Mahmood Khan, deputy managing director of MTB, Md. Mahmudur Rahman, co-founder of WeGro, and Mohammad Hedayet Ullah, managing director of Syngenta Bangladesh, signed the agreement. ■

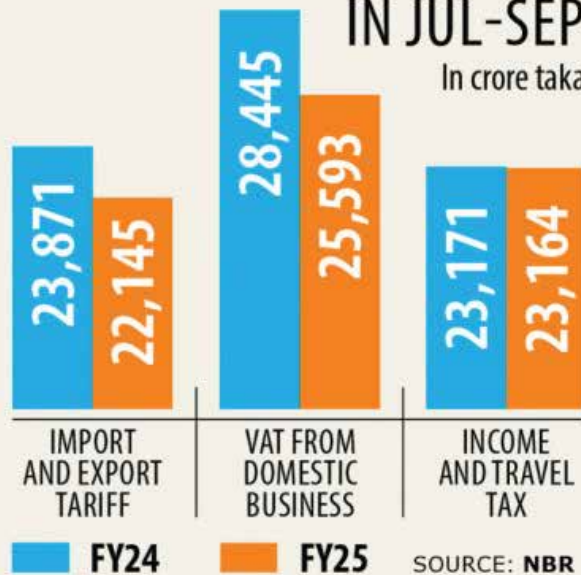


Pubali Bank recently organised a tree plantation programme at Dhaka University (DU) as part of its corporate social responsibility. Professor Dr. Niaz Ahmed Khan, vice-chancellor of DU, was present as the chief guest. Mohammad Ali, managing director of the bank, was present as the special guest. ■

TAX COLLECTION

IN JUL-SEP

In crore taka



Revenue Collection Falls In Jul-Sep Amid Political Upheaval

Business Outlook Report

Revenue collection by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) suffered in July-September period – the first three months of the current 2024-25 fiscal year. The total collection in this period saw a 6.1% fall compared to the same period last year. According to data released by the revenue collecting authority, the total revenue collection target for the first three months of FY2024-25 was Tk96,499.90 crore, but it managed to collect Tk70,902.90 crore. In the last fiscal, the corresponding amount was Tk75,487.70 crore.

According to the data, the revenue collection target for September was Tk39,324 crore. But NBR managed to collect only Tk29,002.68 crore. A senior NBR official told UNB, revenue collection is usually slow during this period of every fiscal

year, but this time it has also been affected by the political upheaval in the wake of the Anti-Discrimination Students movement that started in the first week of July, eventually leading to a change in government and putting the country in a transition period that continues.

Throughout the month of July and particularly in the first week of August, the movement was at its peak leaving widespread violence and bloodshed in its wake, as the government tried to suppress it. There was even a curfew in place from 19 July to 5 August. Almost everything was closed, or heavily regulated. These had naturally impacted the collection of customs and taxes, said the NBR official, who spoke on condition of anonymity considering the sensitivity of the situation. The uncertainty in the business sector continued even after

the change of government in the first week of August. “Due to these reasons, the customs and tax officials said that they could not collect the desired revenue,” the official said. A tax collection target of Tk4,80,000 crore in the 2024-25 fiscal year was fixed for NBR by the last government. NBR officials feel that the pace of tax collection will pick up towards the end of the year.

It may be mentioned that Bangladesh is receiving loan support under a \$4.7 billion programme of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Two major revenue-related conditions attached to the programme are: i) Increasing revenue collection by 1.5% of GDP every year, and ii) removal of all tax exemptions by 2027. There is talk of a strategy to increase revenue collection that will be decided by next December. ■

Economy Facing Challenge As Lending, Investment Grind To Halt



Business Outlook Report

The economy of the country is experiencing a challenging period, with public and private investments coming to a near standstill over the past few months.

Private sector investment has hit a low, as many industrial and bank owners are not present in their respective areas. Consequently, the resumption of activities in private industries and efforts to get the banking system back on track for lending have been moving slowly in recent times. Planning Adviser to

the Interim Government Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, in a recent briefing after an ECNEC meeting, acknowledged the slow pace of production in industries and lending activities in the banking sector.

“Private sector investment is a driving force for the economy. If this sector faces hindrances, the whole economy is affected,” he said. However, Dr. Mahmud noted that it is normal to experience obstacles in investment after a significant political transition. “Investment in the private sector is currently lower,” he

added. Regarding public sector investment, which is executed through the development budget, Dr. Mahmud explained that the interim government is re-evaluating the development projects approved by the previous Awami League government.

The Awami League-led National Economic Council (NEC) approved the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the fiscal year 2024-2025, with a total outlay of Tk 265,000 crore. This included 1,321 projects, comprising 1,133 investment projects, 21 survey projects, 87 technical

assistance projects, and 80 projects from autonomous bodies and corporations. Dr. Mahmud pointed out that many development projects were politically motivated. “Several projects were either poorly implemented or, upon further scrutiny, would not be carried out as planned,” he said.

As a result, the interim government is amending ongoing projects, a time-consuming process. If a project is deemed unnecessary or of low priority, the government is halting further allocations once it reaches a self-sufficient stage. Dr.

Mahmud also cautioned that if both private sector investment and public sector expenditure slow down, the overall money flow in the economy will be affected. He added that rural businesses are reporting sluggish trade due to reduced investments from both sectors.

Among the top 10 sectors in terms of ADP allocation, the transport and communication sector received the highest allocation of Tk 70,687.75

crore (26.67%), followed by the power and energy sector with Tk 40,752 crore (15.38%), and the education sector with Tk 31,529 crore (11.36%).

Other key sectors include housing and community facilities, health, local government and rural development, agriculture, environment, industry, and science and technology. The total allocation for these top 10 sectors amounts to Tk 242,093 crore, representing

90.25% of the total ADP. In a bid to curb inflation, Bangladesh Bank has raised its key policy rate (repo rate) by 50 basis points, bringing it to 9.50%.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the general point-to-point inflation rate dropped to 9.92% in September from 10.49% in August 2024. Both food and non-food inflation also showed a downward trend during this period.

Food inflation declined to 10.40% in September from 11.36% in August, while non-food inflation fell to 9.50% in September from 9.74% in August.

Inflation in both urban and rural areas also decreased last month. In rural areas, inflation dropped to 10.15% in September from 10.95% in August. In urban areas, it fell to 9.83% in September from 10.01% in August. ■

Govt Prioritising Recovery Of Laundered Funds: Salehuddin



Business Outlook Report

Finance and Commerce Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed emphasised that the interim government is prioritising the recovery of funds laundered from the country.

“Efforts are already underway, with a task force and a dedicated committee established to manage the process,” he said during a press interaction following a meeting of the Advisory Council Committee

on Government Procurement at the Secretariat on October 20. He highlighted the need for technical assistance in retrieving the funds, adding that the Governor of the Bangladesh Bank has traveled to Washington to seek such support.

“We are also planning to gather more assistance from international sources. However, gathering comprehensive information about the smuggled funds is essential,” the

finance adviser stated. When asked about a recent proposal by political leaders made during discussions with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus regarding the formation of a commission to recover funds smuggled during the Awami League’s tenure, Salehuddin Ahmed declined to comment. Regarding the timeline for the return of the funds, he explained that since the funds were laundered over an extended period, it is difficult to provide a precise date for their recovery. He, however, reassured the press that the work had already started.

On market stability, he acknowledged that while the import of eggs helped ease the market, the vegetable market still remained volatile. “Vegetables are seasonal, but we expect stability soon, not only in the vegetable market but across all commodities,” he remarked. The government expanded open-market sales through the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) and is also encouraging private organisations to engage in these efforts. ■



Garment Exports To EU Decline 3.53% In Jan-Aug

Business Outlook Report

Bangladesh retained second position in garment exports to the European Union (EU), but shipments of apparel from the South Asian country to the bloc declined 3.53 percent in the January-August period to \$12.90 billion owing to political turmoil and labour unrest, according to data from the Eurostat. High inflationary pressures on the European economy also had an impact, with exports from most major destinations trending downwards.

Nations in the EU imported garment items totalling \$59.32 billion in the eight months, registering a 3.63 percent decline. Garment exports from China, the largest exporter of apparel items to the EU, declined by 4.10 percent to \$15.62 billion in the same period, data showed. Turkey secured third position, exporting apparel worth \$6.84 billion, representing a 7.52 percent decline, while India was the fourth-largest exporter with shipments worth \$3.33 billion, down 2.73 percent. Although

garment shipments from major exporting countries to the EU declined, exports from Cambodia increased by 12.78 percent to \$2.51 billion. Pakistan also performed well, registering a 7.32 percent increase to \$2.43 billion. Another gainer was Morocco, which saw garment exports to the EU grow 6.09 percent to \$2 billion. Meanwhile, shipments from Sri Lanka declined 1.45 percent to \$906.91 million and those from Indonesia declined 9.35 percent to \$677.53 million.

Bangladesh's garment exporters have been mired in crises, witnessing a tumultuous scenario in July, August, September and the first part of October. This started with political upheaval and nationwide protests by students in July and culminated in the political changeover on August 5. However, political and economic uncertainty as well as incidents of arson and extortion continued to cast a shadow over normal business operations. The situation was exacerbated by spells of labour unrest in industrial belts since

September, which caused production losses worth \$400 million, according to data from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. With the months-long turmoil impacting business operations, most exporters struggled to meet lead times and ship goods timely. They also faced work order cancellations and saw factory visits by representatives of international clothing retailers and brands postponed. A few work orders have been shifted away from the country as retailers and brands sought quick production.

At the same time, the EU market was affected by high inflationary pressures due to the severe fallouts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. As a result, the purchasing power of European consumers was eroded although economies in the Eurozone are gradually rebounding. Bangladesh's exports to the EU have been increasing because of a higher focus on high value-added garment items, with work orders shifting from China to Bangladesh. ■

Fashion Brands Face Criticism For Failure To Protect Labour Rights In Bangladesh



Business Outlook Report

Fashion brands, including H&M and Zara, are facing criticism over their lack of action to protect workers' basic rights in Bangladesh, according to Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC).

One year after a violent crackdown by state actors and employers against Bangladeshi garment workers protesting for higher wages, 40,000 workers remain at risk of arrest due to repressive legal charges brought against them through

blank arrest warrants, it said in a recent statement. Campaigners, labour rights advocates and trade union representatives have launched an international campaign condemning the inaction of fashion brands and are calling for the 36 legal cases against worker groups and protesters to be dropped.

Anne Bienias, a lead campaigner for the CCC, is urging brands to take swift action: "Brands such as H&M and Zara have a responsibility to ensure that complaints against

unnamed protesters cannot be used to intimidate workers and their representatives". "The refusal of brands to support union-backed wage demands despite extreme poverty and their lack of willingness to get these cases dropped illustrates who profits from the status quo and who doesn't. Brands clearly do," Bienias said in the statement.

The CCC has linked 45 fashion brands to suppliers who filed charges in 36 cases against garment workers in Bangladesh

and has been pressuring these brands for the past year to ensure the cases are dropped. While some brands have taken initial steps to ensure suppliers drop false allegations, one year on, all brands and suppliers have failed to follow through and not a single case has been cleared.

The CCC is launching a new action tracker to expose which brands are linked to the outstanding warrants, including H&M, Zara, Next, Matalan, Levi's, Bestseller, and more. Campaigners hope

this tool will shed light on the industry's complicity and ensure brands follow through with suppliers to get the charges fully dropped.

The launch of this new coordinated effort to apply pressure on brands coincides with the anniversary of last year's

widespread wage protests in Bangladesh.

Police and the military cracked down on protesting workers who expressed dissatisfaction over the disappointing outcome of the long-awaited minimum wage negotiations. As a result of the violent police

response, four workers lost their lives, hundreds were severely injured and 131 were arrested.

Kalpona Akter, president of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, said: "In an industry where union repression is rife, getting the cases dropped

is just the first but very necessary step toward creating an industry where workers can live a decent life off their wages, and where barriers to freedom of association are removed. We won't live in fear. We are calling for living wages that support our families." ■

BSEC Chairman Urges Collective Efforts For Capital Market To Flourish



Business Outlook Report

Khandaker Rashid Maksud, chairman of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), emphasised the collective efforts to make the capital market the cornerstone of the country's economy and a key source of long-term financing.

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has appreciat-

ed the role of the newly formed board of directors at Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) for facilitating investment to the second largest bourse of the country.

The BSEC chairman made the remarks during a meeting with the bourse's newly formed board and top officials while visiting the CSE head office on October 21. He also emphasised that building a prosperous and successful

capital market will require collaborative efforts from all stakeholders, alongside BSEC.

Addressing the existing challenges, he noted that reforms are essential, though they may take time. He reiterated that the process of reform cannot be done in isolation, and therefore BSEC is gathering feedback from all stakeholders to implement these reforms systematically within the legal frame-

work. During the meeting, CSE made a detailed presentation outlining the current state of the stock exchange, including its infrastructure, workforce, and activities. BSEC Commissioners Mohammad Mohsin Chowdhury, Md Ali Akbar, Farzana Lalarukh, along with other BSEC officials, attended the meeting. CSE was represented by its newly appointed Chairman AKM Habibur Rahman, Managing Director M Shaifur Rahman Mazumder, and other senior executives. Additionally, a separate meeting was held between BSEC and CSE's stakeholder companies and local partners. During this meeting, stakeholder representatives shared their views and expressed their hope for a strong and thriving capital market in the future. Topics such as ensuring market governance, boosting investor confidence, public issue regulations, and margin rule reforms were discussed. ■



Dairy Farmers For Urgent Govt Steps To Address Challenges In Sector

Business Outlook Report

The Bangladesh Dairy and Fattening Farmers Association (BDFFA) has urged the government to take immediate steps for ensuring the supply of affordable milk and meat to consumers by addressing the challenges plaguing the dairy and livestock sectors.

The association highlighted a range of issues hindering the consistent production of milk and meat, calling for policy interventions to stabilise the market and protect local farmers. During a press conference held at the Dhaka Reporters Unity's Sagar-Runi auditorium on October 20, BDFFA leaders outlined several critical challenges faced by farmers.

They demanded that utility bills for dairy and fattening farms be lowered to the level of agricultural tariff. According to the association, while the electricity tariff for agriculture is Tk5.40 per unit, dairy farms are

charged between Tk11 and Tk14 per unit, significantly increasing their production costs. To provide affordable milk and meat, the association called for subsidies similar to those given to farmers in Europe, the US, and India. They argued that without proper government support or a tax raise to control powdered milk imports, local farmers would continue to face unfair competition, jeopardising the stability in the domestic market.

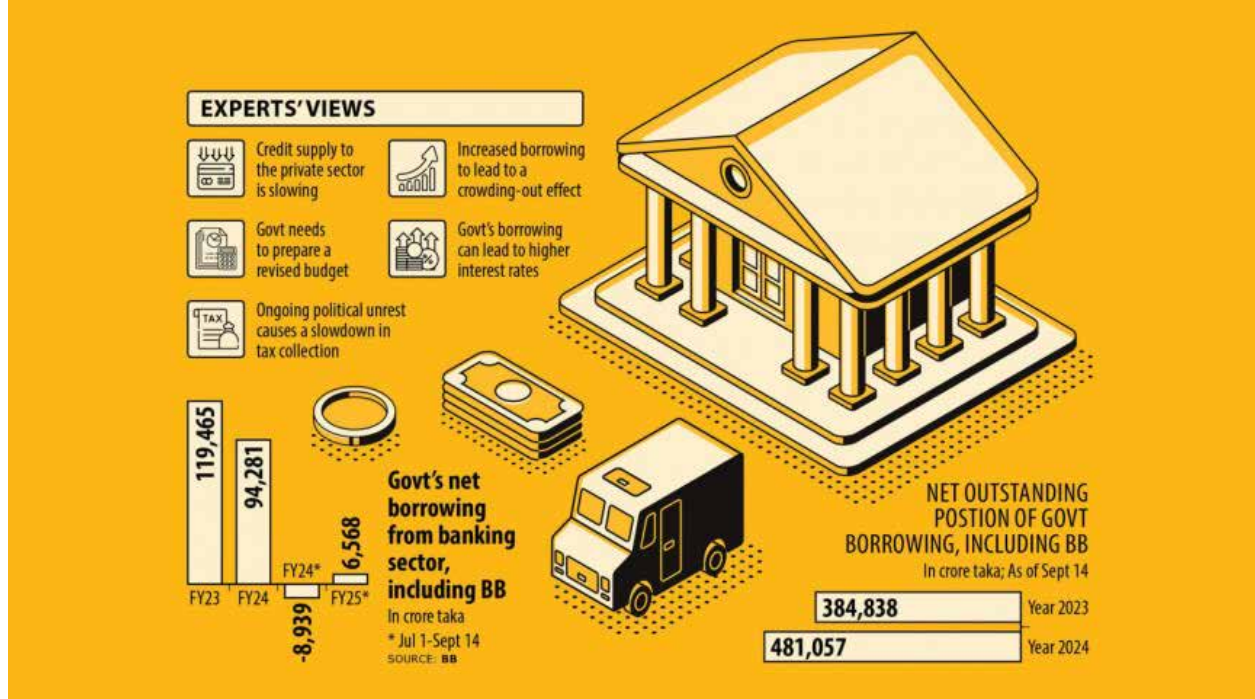
Speaking at the event, BDFFA President Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, General Secretary Mostafizur Rahman Bhuttu, and executive committee members emphasised the importance of fair pricing and a stable supply chain. They appealed to the adviser of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock to address the issues face by dairy farmers promptly.

The association also raised concerns about imported cattle semen quality,

stating that farmers are being defrauded. They urged the government to ensure access to proven, high-quality crossbred and dual-purpose bull semen to increase milk and meat production.

Additionally, they requested duty-free imports of cattle feed for commercial importers, noting that feed mills currently enjoy this privilege, which indirectly contributes to rising milk and meat prices.

In addressing the cattle disease outbreaks, the BDFFA called for a government-funded project to supply free vaccines against Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), both of which are causing significant losses to farmers. The high cost of the imported vaccines has made these inaccessible for many small-scale farmers, who are witnessing cattle deaths or reproductive issues due to the diseases. ■



Govt Borrowing From Banks Rises As Unrest Hits Tax Collection

Business Outlook Report

The government's net borrowing from the banking system rose in the first two and half months of the current fiscal year in the face of falling tax collection and surging foreign debt servicing costs, raising concerns of a crowding out effect on private credit.

The government's borrowing from banks increased by Tk 6,568 crore during July 1 to September 15 of fiscal year (FY) 2024-25. During the same period a year ago, the net borrowing from banks fell by Tk 8,939 crore, according to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) data. The spike in borrowing took place at a time when high inflation, rising interest

rates and import contraction have caused a slowdown in businesses and investment. Bangladesh's economic activities ground to a near-halt in July amid deadly protests and a mass uprising, which led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5.

The interim government took charge in the second week of August, the latter part of which saw devastating floods in the Eastern districts and crippled the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway, the key economic corridor which carries most of the country's export and import cargo. Tax collection by the National Board of Revenue (NBR), which collects more than 85 percent of total revenue,

fell 6 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of FY25. Disbursement of loans by bilateral and multilateral lenders fell by a third year-on-year to \$846 million in the July-September period of FY25. At the same time, Bangladesh's foreign debt servicing shot up 29 percent year-on-year to \$1,126 million.

In net terms, the country spent more to repay foreign loans than it received during the period. "The ongoing political unrest has triggered a slowdown in revenue growth between July-September and Annual Development Programme implementation," said Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy

Research Institute of Bangladesh. "The resulting economic uncertainties that we have witnessed have also motivated development partners like the World Bank to reduce our growth forecast for the current year to 4 percent," he said.

"Moreover, the lack of coherence within the civil bureaucracy, and recurring strikes and unrest on various issues are keeping political uncertainties very much alive. As a result, the government is depending on commercial banks to meet its expenditure outlay. "But this is unlikely to influence inflation as it does not involve the printing of high-powered money." Central bank data showed that the govern-

ment repaid Tk 29,272 crore from July 1 to September 15 this year, which was higher than the amount it repaid in the same period a year ago. "Furthermore, given Bangladesh Bank has categorically stated that it is not willing to directly lend to the government through the creation of high-powered money, the inflationary pressure is expected to come down provided that the central bank remains committed to the tightened

ment could worsen the inflationary environment. The increased availability of money in the economy, without a corresponding rise in the production of goods and services, can drive up prices, exacerbating inflation." Additionally, the recent data on currency outside banks, which rose by 0.69 percent in August 2024, suggests that more money is circulating in the economy, potentially adding to inflationary pressures.

to absorb a larger portion of the debt. "Government borrowing from banks can lead to a crowding-out effect, where private businesses have less access to loans due to the government soaking up available funds," he said. Islam added that the net credit to the private sector, which increased 0.09 percent in August 2024 compared to 9.84 percent in June 2024, suggests that credit expansion to the private sector is slowing, potentially due to

collection continues to be a concern. The slower growth in tax revenues further exacerbates the need for borrowing, putting additional strain on fiscal management." Islam said the overall economy of Bangladesh is facing a slowdown, and the heavy government borrowing from the banking sector could exacerbate this issue.

Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the government does not have much option beyond bank borrowing for budget deficit financing. "External borrowing is tied to development project implications. Sales of national savings instruments has fallen due to drop in the disposable income of the middle class." Khan said borrowing from commercial banks should not be very high.

The government should revise the budget at the earliest, keeping in view a realistic revenue mobilisation target and a budget deficit that the economy can absorb, he added. The previous Awami League government framed a nearly Tk 8 lakh crore budget with plans to borrow over Tk 2.51 lakh crore for the FY25. "Essentially, it will inform the likely scope for public expenditure. The government indeed will be required to prioritise its public expenditure. And it should prioritise the interest of marginalised people." ■



monetary regime," said Rahman. However, Deen Islam, associate professor of economics at the University of Dhaka, was of a different opinion. "Increased borrowing from the banking system often leads to higher liquidity in the market, which can contribute to inflationary pressures, especially when not offset by corresponding increases in productivity or supply," he said. "With headline inflation already high, further borrowing by the govern-

ment could worsen the inflationary environment. The increased availability of money in the economy, without a corresponding rise in the production of goods and services, can drive up prices, exacerbating inflation." Additionally, the recent data on currency outside banks, which rose by 0.69 percent in August 2024, suggests that more money is circulating in the economy, potentially adding to inflationary pressures.

ment could worsen the inflationary environment. The increased availability of money in the economy, without a corresponding rise in the production of goods and services, can drive up prices, exacerbating inflation." Additionally, the recent data on currency outside banks, which rose by 0.69 percent in August 2024, suggests that more money is circulating in the economy, potentially adding to inflationary pressures.

Nilphamari Farmers Eye Bumper Yield Of Winter Vegetables



Business Outlook Report

Farmers of Teesta riverbed localities in the Nilphamari district are anticipating a bumper yield of green winter vegetables, including some advanced ones. The Teesta riverbed silver sandy land areas of the district have been covered with greenery with numerous varieties of winter vegetables creating an eye-catching look everywhere in this current season.

Most farmers widely cultivated winter vegetables like onion, potato, garlic, chillies, bean, brinjal, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, tomatoes etc. In order to overcome their financial insolvency, the peasants are showing interest in large-scale commercial vegetable farming in vast riverbed areas creating a silent revolution in agriculture. At the same time, the farmers are expecting huge production to cover up the damages caused by the recent flood. During recent visits to

different char areas like Jhunagach Chapani, Khalisha Chapani, Dauwabari, Char Khoribari, Baish Pukur, Baburhat, Tunirhat, Pagolpara, Purba Chatnai of Dimla and Jaldhaka upazila of the district, the Daily Sun correspondent saw that most of the farmers were busy in their fields. Farmer Abdul Matin of Tunirhat village in Dimla upazila said, “This year I have cultivated winter vegetables on 80 decimals of sandy lands, now I am expecting good production”.

A female farmer Kahinur Begum of Purba Chatnai villages of the upazila said, “This year I have cultivated green chillies, onion, bean, brinjal, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, including different types of spinach, on 2 bighas of land, after taking a loan from a local NGO”. “I’m taking care of the vegetable field with the help of labourers as I have already sold different types of spinach at almost Tk10,000. Now I am expecting a

minimum Tk20,000–25,000 as profit from the land.” According to the source of Nilphamari DAE office, a total of 2,945 hectares of sandy lands in Dimla upazila and 328 hectares of sandy lands at the Teesta riverbed char areas in Jaldhaka upazila of the district have been cultivated.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) of Nilphamari agriculturist Dr SM Abu Bakar Saiful Islam said, “There are 3,273 hectares of sandy lands available in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazila. Among them, maximum sandy lands have been used for varieties of winter vegetable cultivation in this current season. Farmers are hoping for huge production as a lot of winter vegetables were damaged by flood recently”. “Nilphamari DEA Office has arranged many training programmes and carried out campaigns for using organic fertiliser before winter vegetable cultivation”, he added. ■

	Percentage change													
	July-September FY24						July-September FY25 over July-September FY24							
	Opening		Settlement		Opening		Settlement		Opening		Settlement			
Total Domestic Credit (BDT in crore)	1922567.70	2115524.90	2117810.20	10.16	0.11	-0.22	9.80	381879.60	424877.10	426233.30	11.61	0.32	-1.41	9.69
a) Net Credit to the Govt. Sector	45431.40	1495256.70	1641228.70	7.58	-1.10	0.59	9.42	48874.30	1642702.60	1642702.60	9.86	0.09	0.07	9.84
b) Credit to the Other Public Sector														
c) Credit to the Private Sector														
L/C Opening and Settlement (in million US\$)														
a) Consumer Goods	1455.42	1669.10	1330.60	1375.83	-8.58	-17.57	-13.56	651.34	384.95	491.11	-40.90	-24.96	-23.86	
b) Capital Machinery	1104.75	1324.72	1024.96	1147.48	-7.22	-13.38	-12.00	2704.89	1999.97	2243.38	-26.06	-7.16	-5.02	
c) Intermediate Goods	5391.93	5291.88	5643.23	5729.24	4.66	8.26	-15.90	5409.35	5207.40	5227.69	-3.73	-0.57	5.80	
d) Petroleum	16717.68	16614.24	15591.11	16214.73	-6.74	-2.40	-8.29							
e) Industrial Raw Materials														
f) Others														
Total														
Rate of Inflation on the basis of Consumer Price Index for National (Base:2021-22=100)														
a) Twelve Month Average Basis	9.59	9.66	9.69	9.73	9.73	9.73	9.97	9.86	9.81	9.74	9.89	9.72	10.49	9.92
b) Point to Point Basis														
Corresponding Period														
a) Twelve Month Average Basis	7.92	8.14	8.39	8.64	8.84	9.02	9.29	8.57	9.33	9.24	9.74	9.24	9.92	9.63
b) Point to Point Basis														
Classified Loan														
a) % of Classified Loan on Total Outstanding	8.96	9.36	8.16	8.80	10.11	9.93	12.56	0.49	-0.08	0.30	1.22	2.44	3.68	
b) % of Net Classified Loan on Net Outstanding														
Agricultural and Non-farm Rural Credit (BDT in crore)														
a) Disbursement **	3316.99	3516.38	8824.64	2080.20	2587.27	6458.18	28834.21	2540.26	8014.31	3764.51	9209.97	33010.09	27463.41	
b) Recovery	53230.38	54164.17	54164.17	55822.75	54927.74	54927.74	49802.28							
c) Outstanding														
SME Loan (BDT in crore)														
a) Disbursement	60611.61	49068.40	62747.05	52654.90	64841.99	53107.48	224103.87	282896.54	283236.32	304241.45	303970.10	306119.87	295842.02	
b) Outstanding														
Industrial Term Loan (BDT in crore)														
a) Disbursement	29574.55	20907.66	26127.36	26194.00	33763.22	22015.37	95172.03	50593.69	17899.35	25062.93	23468.00	25345.17	106393.23	
b) Recovery	360051.14	383075.76	395317.82	399693.22	433807.76	428079.27	395317.82							
c) Outstanding														
GDP Growth Rate (Base: 2015-16)														
	7.27	6.59	7.32	7.88	3.45	6.94	5.82							

Weekly basis commodity Statement of LCs Opened and Settleed for the month of August/2022

In million US \$(Provisional)

Sl. No.	Name Of The Commodity	First week		Second week			Third week		Fourth week		Fifth week		Total	
		Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	
1.	Rice	6.54	2.75	6.74	6.05	16.40	4.26	8.36	3.21	4.98	0.51	43.03	16.78	
	i) Private Sector	6.52	2.75	6.74	6.05	16.37	4.26	8.36	3.21	4.98	0.51	42.97	16.78	
	ii) Public Sector	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	
2.	Wheat	35.70	11.42	0.91	12.04	0.68	6.45	18.73	10.57	119.26	3.62	175.29	44.10	
	i) Private Sector	13.28	11.42	0.91	12.04	0.68	6.45	18.73	10.57	119.26	3.62	152.87	44.10	
	ii) Public Sector	22.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.42	0.00	
3.	Sugar	3.36	10.09	0.07	10.78	0.02	5.27	2.53	24.36	0.04	10.33	6.02	60.83	
	a. Raw	0.00	5.09	0.04	5.78	0.02	5.27	2.53	14.36	0.00	10.28	2.59	40.78	
	i) Private Sector	0.00	5.09	0.04	5.73	0.02	5.27	0.00	14.36	0.00	10.28	0.06	40.73	
	ii) Public Sector	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	2.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.53	0.06	
	b. Refined	3.36	5.00	0.03	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	0.04	0.06	3.43	20.04	
	i) Private Sector	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.98	0.04	0.06	0.04	20.03	
	ii) Public Sector	3.36	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	3.39	0.02	
4.	Milk Food	10.02	10.82	3.15	6.34	1.93	1.75	4.01	8.15	0.09	0.53	19.21	27.60	
5.	Edible Oil (Refined)	47.55	36.81	49.28	51.78	91.38	46.41	57.07	17.37	0.00	4.03	245.29	156.40	
	a) Soyabean	2.93	18.50	14.18	0.00	4.81	2.49	0.00	8.66	0.00	0.00	21.92	29.65	
	b) Palm Oil	4.77	13.76	0.01	28.85	19.57	16.25	57.07	4.86	0.00	4.03	81.42	67.75	
	c) Others	39.85	4.55	35.09	22.93	67.00	27.67	0.00	3.85	0.00	0.00	141.95	59.00	
6.	Edible Oil (Crude)	39.50	40.14	9.36	15.78	44.59	54.37	51.72	23.16	0.01	17.45	145.17	150.91	
	a) Soyabean	10.23	13.30	6.52	10.69	17.56	45.18	21.30	22.74	0.00	11.50	55.60	103.41	
	b) Palm Oil	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.10	0.00	9.17	30.40	0.37	0.00	0.00	30.40	14.63	
	c) Others	29.27	26.84	2.84	0.00	27.04	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.01	5.95	59.17	32.86	
7.	Dry Fruits	0.60	0.32	0.32	0.52	0.41	0.14	0.57	0.24	0.07	0.03	1.97	1.25	
	a) Dates	0.09	0.06	0.11	0.29	0.22	0.03	0.40	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.86	0.45	
	b) Others	0.50	0.26	0.21	0.24	0.19	0.10	0.17	0.18	0.03	0.03	1.10	0.80	
8.	Pulses	0.57	0.82	1.27	0.71	1.06	15.39	8.53	7.58	2.06	2.56	13.49	27.05	
	a) Masur Dal	0.44	0.70	1.14	0.71	1.01	15.06	8.43	7.14	2.02	0.58	13.03	24.19	
	b) Chola Dal	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	c) Others	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.00	0.06	0.32	0.10	0.43	0.04	1.98	0.46	2.86	
9.	Onion	3.46	3.32	3.30	3.86	2.78	2.19	3.44	3.55	0.87	0.65	13.85	13.58	
10.	Ginger	0.16	0.44	0.64	0.51	0.26	0.21	0.18	0.50	0.03	0.07	1.27	1.73	
11.	Drugs & Medicines	2.48	1.72	1.03	2.37	0.20	1.62	1.22	0.81	2.07	0.12	7.01	6.63	
12.	Poultry Feeds	7.98	17.10	2.67	22.62	4.17	3.44	3.06	17.58	2.51	3.41	20.38	64.15	
13.	Coal	14.98	2.96	13.32	0.59	8.39	0.16	0.45	0.28	0.11	0.21	37.25	4.19	
14.	Cement	2.73	4.39	4.33	0.53	1.07	4.29	2.40	4.86	0.00	1.31	10.53	15.38	
15.	Clinker	15.81	8.51	24.36	12.69	20.46	4.70	20.95	19.74	2.33	6.72	83.90	52.36	
16.	B.P Sheet	2.64	1.11	3.42	1.41	0.29	0.81	0.92	0.57	0.70	0.35	7.98	4.25	
17.	Scrap Vessels	12.06	8.88	22.93	2.72	0.00	3.31	1.66	6.09	0.00	11.82	36.66	32.82	
18.	Paper	2.11	2.68	1.16	2.31	0.86	2.96	0.83	3.71	0.29	0.93	5.24	12.60	
	i) Newsprint	0.01	0.24	0.00	0.09	0.54	0.15	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.55	0.55	
	ii) Others	2.10	2.44	1.16	2.22	0.32	2.81	0.83	3.65	0.29	0.93	4.69	12.05	
19.	Zinc Ingot	0.61	0.79	1.91	4.89	0.00	2.11	5.75	0.95	1.85	0.08	10.13	8.83	
20.	Raw Cotton	38.87	70.33	42.74	65.53	27.12	63.07	33.07	74.82	6.44	22.88	148.24	296.63	
21.	Synthetic/Mixed Yarn	21.65	24.52	13.22	26.10	17.13	20.06	12.57	22.86	3.38	6.47	67.95	100.00	
22.	Cotton Yarn	27.29	50.04	29.08	53.21	22.55	42.60	27.32	52.75	7.26	12.68	113.49	211.29	
23.	Textile Fabrics	25.43	18.18	23.03	19.82	15.03	16.66	16.59	23.26	1.53	4.19	81.62	82.12	
24.	Textile Accessories	18.41	21.01	17.34	16.99	10.97	15.95	22.04	22.73	5.72	8.80	74.47	85.48	
25.	Back-to-Back L/Cs	171.73	155.03	131.06	160.80	80.92	117.43	125.50	185.55	18.89	48.03	528.10	666.85	
	a. Fabrics	124.44	108.31	89.84	110.88	55.79	81.34	92.85	132.42	11.86	35.42	374.78	468.38	
	b. Accessories	42.05	42.33	38.36	42.70	22.42	33.74	31.09	49.26	6.71	11.38	140.64	179.41	
	c. Others	5.23	4.39	2.86	7.22	2.71	2.35	1.56	3.87	0.32	1.23	12.68	19.06	
26.	Pharmaceutical Raw Materials	19.59	17.20	12.10	12.53	11.21	13.11	14.78	18.77	1.99	3.77	59.67	65.37	
27.	Chemicals & Chemical Products	65.36	22.53	78.18	109.53	34.82	54.94	19.88	198.75	3.89	18.13	202.12	403.88	
	a. Chemical Fertilizer	39.74	6.19	20.47	88.18	23.53	40.30	3.22	179.42	0.48	3.46	87.43	317.55	
	i) Urea	33.85	0.21	0.63	0.05	1.40	0.93	0.38	0.13	0.00	0.00	36.26	1.33	
	ii) TSP	0.27	0.03	14.14	30.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	28.97	0.00	0.00	14.41	59.46	
	iii) MOP	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	20.70	29.02	0.04	57.71	0.00	0.11	20.74	86.87	
	iv) DAP	2.78	0.62	3.18	50.82	0.09	0.25	0.08	88.78	0.00	0.00	6.13	140.47	
	v) Others	2.84	5.33	2.52	6.82	1.34	10.09	2.72	3.84	0.48	3.36	9.89	29.43	
	b. Other Chemicals & Chemical Product	25.62	16.34	57.71	21.35	11.28	14.65	16.66	19.33	3.41	14.66	114.69	86.33	
28.	P.O.L.	53.95	62.39	48.86	216.24	48.89	49.31	46.46	104.75	44.78	0.00	242.95	432.69	
	i) Crude	2.50	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.12	0.06	0.20	0.00	0.00	2.62	0.41	
	ii) Refined	51.45	62.30	48.81	216.24	48.88	49.19	46.40	104.55	44.78	0.00	240.33	432.28	
29.	Capital Machinery	39.67	60.15	30.44	72.01	18.97	58.71	54.02	62.79	6.14	21.98	149.24	275.64	
30.	Machinery For Mize Industries	40.80	38.27	36.40	26.25	33.05	46.50	40.34	48.12	10.81	12.19	161.40	171.34	
31.	Motor Vehicle	9.83	15.82	4.24	16.59	1.19	7.30	7.55	9.67	1.18	4.16	23.99	53.54	
32.	Computer, Its Accessories & Spares	4.49	4.33	1.11	5.08	3.04	5.07	3.14	2.92	0.06	0.90	11.85	18.29	
33.	Medical, Surgical & Dental Equipments	1.62	2.12	2.18	2.20	1.07	2.10	2.28	3.90	0.77	0.57	7.92	10.90	
34.	Others	391.39	369.18	331.13	427.49	255.00	403.68	326.46	452.04	76.18	150.14	1380.15	1802.54	
	Grand Total	1138.93	1096.19	951.28	1388.85	775.92	1076.34	944.39	1436.97	326.30	379.63	4136.82	5377.98	

Data downloaded: on 31.08.22

eTIN

Register as a taxpayer

eReturn

File your tax return
Download Express Certificate

ReturnVerify/PSR

Verify your Return

eReturnLedger

Update your tax payment

eTaxPayment(eTDS)

Manage your source tax

eTaxService

Interact online with tax support team

No Documents Needed To File E-Return

Business Outlook Report

To ease online tax return submissions, taxpayers will not be required to submit any documents or soft copies when filing an e-return, according to the National Board of Revenue (NBR). "We made the decision to ensure ease of doing business and encourage taxpayers. The taxpayers, however, will have to keep the required documents on hand," said Md Abdur Rahman Khan, chairman of the NBR.

"If the taxman finds any discrepancy, the taxpayers will be responsible for their declaration on the return," he said. When filing taxes manually, taxpayers have to provide essential documents like copies of their e-TIN, national ID, address details, and the previous year's return. Besides, employees have to provide salary certificates, bank statements, and other relevant documents. For different income sources, certificates or documents should be submitted,

including investment details, property information, and tax-free income certificates. "In this regard, the taxpayers will have to take the "risk", but we believe taxpayers will endorse accurate information," the NBR chairman said. Khan made the remarks while speaking to the reporters at the NBR headquarters in the capital's Agargaon on October 23.

"We want to reduce the manual connection with the taxpayers and taxmen," he said, adding that they have already created guidelines for taxpayers and were taking steps to publicise the initiative through videos and other methods. On top of that, the NBR on October 22 issued an order to make the online filing of income tax returns mandatory for government employees under the jurisdiction of income tax circles located in Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj city corporations. Additionally, all

scheduled banks and mobile telecom service providers now require employees to file income tax filings online. They also brought some multinational companies under the rule, including Unilever Bangladesh Limited, British American Tobacco Bangladesh Limited, Marico Bangladesh Limited, Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited, Bata Shoe Company (Bangladesh) Limited, and Nestlé Bangladesh PLC.

"We have initially chosen the companies considered technologically sound," Khan said. Although the NBR has focused on the e-return system, the tax administration will continue the tax week from November similar to previous years, he said. "We won't provide services door-to-door. Rather, we will intensify our online services. If we get any specific request to educate someone about the return submission, we can serve them through volunteers." ■

IMF, World Bank Meetings Clouded By Wars

Business Outlook Report

Global finance chiefs will gather in Washington this week amid intense uncertainty over wars in the Middle East and Europe, a flagging Chinese economy and worries that a coin-toss US presidential election could ignite new trade battles and erode multilateral cooperation, reports Reuters.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank annual meetings are scheduled to draw more than 10,000 people from finance ministries, central banks and civil society groups to discuss efforts to boost patchy global growth, deal with debt distress and finance the green energy transition. But the elephant in the meeting rooms will be the potential for a Nov. 5 election victory by US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump to upend the international economic

system with massive new US tariffs and borrowing and a shift away from climate cooperation. "Arguably the most important issue for the global economy - the outcome of the US election - is not on the official agenda this week, but it's on everyone's mind," said Josh Lipsky, a former IMF official who now heads the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center. The election "has huge implications on trade policy, on the future of the dollar, on who the next Federal Reserve chair is going to be, and all of those impact every country in the world," he added.

US Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential candidate, is largely expected to continue the Biden administration's resumption of multilateral cooperation on climate, tax and debt relief issues if she wins next month's vote. The meetings,

which start on October 21 and get into full swing later in the week, will likely be the last for US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who spearheaded much of the Biden administration's multilateral economic and climate efforts. Yellen has said she is "probably done" with public service at the end of President Joe Biden's term in office in January.

But growing anti-China trade sentiment and industrial policy plans from wealthy countries, punctuated by the Biden administration's steep tariff increases on Chinese electric vehicles, semiconductors and solar products, is expected to be a key discussion topic at the meetings. The IMF will update its global growth forecasts on Tuesday. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva last week flagged a lackluster outlook, saying the world, saddled by high





debts, was headed for slow medium-term growth, and pointing to a "difficult future." Still, Georgieva said she was "not super-pessimistic" about the outlook, given pockets of resilience, notably in the US and India that are offsetting continued weakness in China and Europe. While debt defaults among poor countries may have peaked, participants at the annual meetings are expected to discuss the growing problem of scarce liquidity that is forcing some emerging markets saddled with high debt service costs to delay development investments as overseas aid shrinks.

Last year's IMF and World Bank annual meetings got underway in Morocco as the Palestinian militant group Hamas attacked Israel, killing more than 1,200 people and unleashing conflicts with a death toll of more

than 40,000 Gazans, according to Palestinian health authorities. The economic damage has been largely limited to economies in or adjacent to the conflict: Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. "If there was to be an escalation that puts at risk oil and gas delivery, that could have much more significant spillover for the world economy," Georgieva told Reuters in an interview.

Support for Ukraine also will be a major topic at the meetings, as the G7 wealthy democracies aim to reach a political agreement by the end of October for a \$50 billion loan for the Eastern European country backed by frozen Russian sovereign assets. The loan in part is seen as a financial bulwark against a Trump victory next month, as the former US president has threatened to "get out of Ukraine." Despite the wall of

worry, World Bank and IMF officials intend to spend the week concentrating on the work at hand at the meetings, which coincide with the 80th anniversary of the institutions' founding in 1944 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire.

For World Bank President Ajay Banga, that means finding ways to speed up the preparations of projects to use the bank's expanded lending capacity and refining a new scorecard aimed at improving development outcomes. "The world is the world right now. And rather than use the meetings to go over what we already seem to know - which is to admire the problem - I'd like to take the annual meetings to doing something about what we can do as institutions," Banga told reporters last week. ■

Another Gas Reserve Found In Old Sylhet Well



Business Outlook Report

A new gas reserve has been found when conducting maintenance works in an old well in Sylhet Gas Field, Managing Director of Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL) Mizanur Rahman said on Tuesday, confirming a second major discovery in the same well since August. He said the new gas was found at a depth of 1,200 meters in Well No 7 after completion of its drilling process in Sylhet gas field located in Haipur of Jaintiapur upazila, Sylhet.

The field is expected to produce 7-8 million cubic feet of gas per day (MMCFD), and the exact reserve size would be known in a week, Mizanur

Rahman told reporters. He also noted that on 14 August, a new gas reserve was found in the same well at the depth 2,010 metres from which primarily 6-7 MMCFD of gas is being produced. “The new gas reserve is an addition to the previous one,” he said adding, “we hope that it would be possible to add the new gas to the national grid shortly.” The BGFL officials said that after the successful drilling of a number of wells, some 60-70 MMCFD gas was obtained which is now being supplied to the national grid.

Earlier, on 24 May of this year, 21 MMCFD gas was found in well No 8 of Kailashtila gas field in Sylhet after drilling to a depth of 3,440

meters in the well. Before this, on 27 January, a new gas structure was found in well No 2 of Rashidpur under Sylhet gas field which has a reserve of about 157 billion cubic feet (BCF). The gas fields operated under the SGFL have been supplying more than 100 MMCFD gas to the national grid.

The officials said they have been working to increase the production level to 150 MMCFD by completing a few more projects this year. If all the work is completed by 2025 as per the time set by the government, it will be possible to add 250 MMCFD gas to the national grid from the fields under the SGFL alone, said a top official. ■

Specialized in EPC and projects

Solar powered pump solution

Solar Streetlight solution

Solar telecom solution

Roof top solar power system

Solar home system(SHS)

WORRIED ABOUT GAS SUPPLY TO YOUR INDUSTRY?

Omera
PRIORITY

**INDUSTRIAL LPG SOLUTIONS
TO SUPPORT YOUR
ENERGY NEEDS**



HOTLINE

16797



OMERA SUPPLIES LPG FOR

Boilers	Garments Industry
Industrial Dryers	Ceramic Industry
Furnaces	Metal Casting Industry
Kilns of Ceramic	Metal & Aluminium Industry
	Food Industry etc.

OMERA PRIORITY OFFERS

- Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as a green & clean fuel
- Competitive energy solution
- Alternate energy solution to natural gas
- 24/7 secured supply of LPG across the country
- Flexible LPG storage set-up solutions
- Best technical service in the industry

