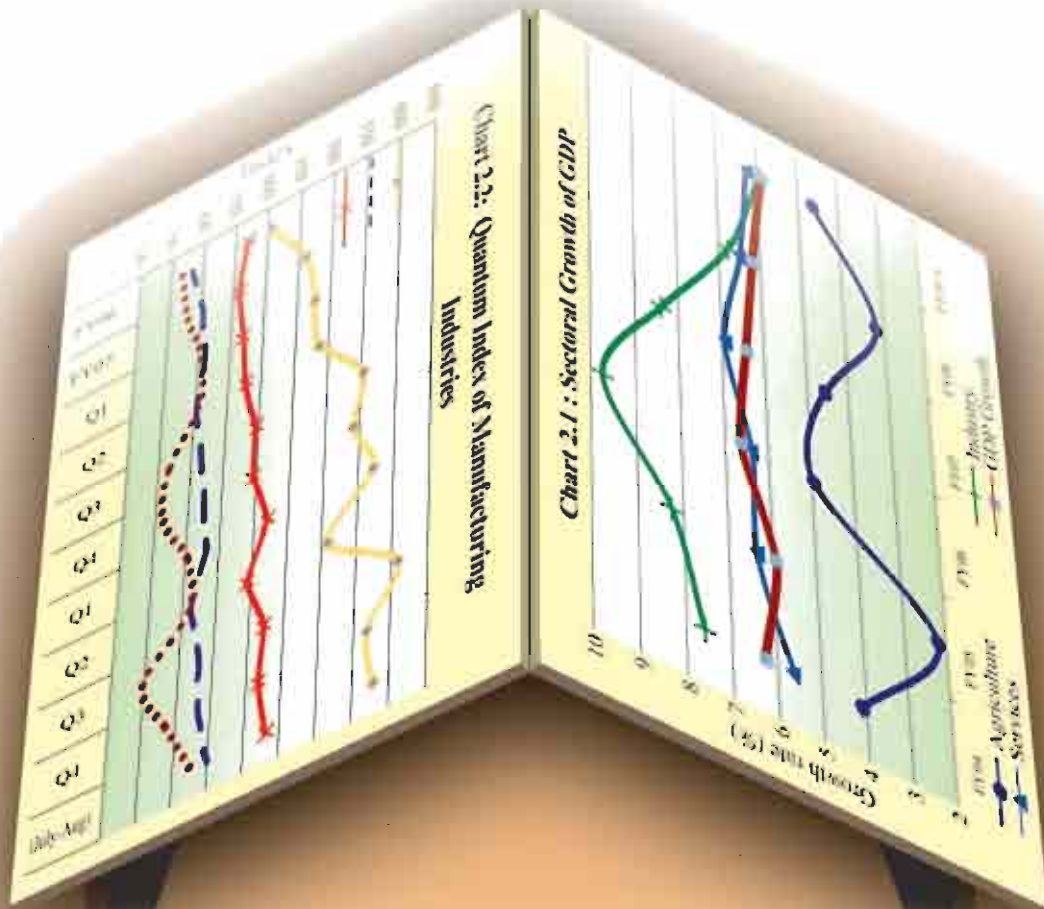


DCCI REVIEW

Monetary Policy



ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি
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Monetary Policy

Monetary policy is the process by which the central bank of a country controls the supply of money, the availability of money, and the cost of money or rate of interest, in order to attain a set of objectives towards the growth and stability of the economy. Even though fiscal policies have been looked upon as the driver of growth and investment for maintaining economic stability, importance of Monetary Policy (PP) can not be ignored.

The just-announced Monetary Policy Statement (MPS) for the second half of 2009-2010 (January-June 2010) fiscal aims to increase investment while keeping inflation in check. The policy for the first half year was essentially no different, but it had to navigate rough waters and left some lessons for implementing the policy for the second half. The extended policy instrument has been dubbed 'supportive, accommodative and inclusive' as it was supposed to be, since it is a product of a consultative process encompassing all stakeholders such as government, different professional groups, public representatives and trade bodies.

Inflation happens to be a pivotal challenge to efficient macroeconomic management. Even though inflation rate was low in the beginning of the current fiscal, yet it has started rising lately and could increase further. The prices of food and nonfood commodities have been on the rise in the international market. This breeds inflationary expectation in the local market. Due to high price of rice in India and the Philippines, two of the major players in world cereal market, a certain measure of import uncertainty might have led to the domestic prices holding firm whereas good aman harvest should have set in a downward trend in the price. Of course, aus crop hasn't come in handy. To maintain stability in food prices OMS operation may be in tandem with food for work and VGF, will be of some help, but the real emphasis should be to raise productivity of boro to underpin food security.

The target of 6.5 percent inflation at the end of FY2010 appears to be quite realistic but prices of commodities might start increasing in near future due to recovery of economies from slowdown. Now prices of oil and soybean are on upturn on the international market. So there is no reason to feel comfort under these circumstances. Credit demand from private sector could be met due to present liquidity glut in banks although the government wants a portion of money from banking system. Crowding out effects on private sector credit remains a concern. But in the view of surplus liquidity, this should not be a worry.

MPS referred to speculation of commodity prices in the markets as one of the reasons for CPI inflation and hinted the risk of speculation from production to supplying. We need to target for future through hedge funds by financial institution in such a way, so that supplying response is not constrained by the speculation.

It is true that private sector credit flow is on a growth path with reduced government borrowing from the banking system, LC opening for import of capital machinery and industrial raw material shows an upward trend and export is on the mend. Yet, we have a lot more to do to enhance investment confidence in the domestic economy and bolster internal and external demands in the market. Unless massive funds are injected into improving infrastructure including replenishing and steadying gas and electric supplies, the overall investment in the economy, both foreign and local, will not pick up significantly.

DCCI is heartened by the fact that the MPS has demanded that the excess liquidity of the banks be used up in SME development including agro-based industries which can diversify our export base. The government should form a high-powered committee to devise practical mechanism to deal effectively with bad debt, infuse competition in financial market, reduce interest rate spread and ensure availability of borrowing by private sector. We have no disagreement over the

fundamental stance of MPS that aims to accommodate GDP growth, spur investment and anchor inflation. But we could have felt happier if issues such as disbursement of industrial term loans to accelerate investment and GDP growth, policy guidelines to deal with bad debt, and reduction of interest rate spread received adequate attention.

The MPS has paid less attention to expansion of modern and labour-intensive industries. If Bangladesh needs to attain a 6 percent GDP growth, expansion of modern and labour-intensive industries is necessary. Disbursement of industrial term loan fell by 9.6 percent during the July-March period of FY2008-09 to Tk 13,174.22 crore from Tk 14,574.31 crore a year ago.

The World Bank, in its recently released (Jan 20, 2010) Global Economic Prospects 2010 Report, states that global recovery is now underway, which indicates that most of the developed economies have come out of the recession. As such, the Asian economies are competing against one another for economic recovery, particularly in exports. The frozen food exports are set for a comeback after the lifting of embargo on shrimp export by EU.

MPS mentioned that weighted average inter-bank call money rate which was below 1% in July 2009 is now above 4%.. The rise of call money rate as mentioned in MPS reflects that economic activity is picking up, however, a persistent rise in call money rate in the backdrop of huge excess liquidity (Tk. 23,586.22 crore) in the first three quarters of 2009 is indicative that while some banks are performing good others are not. Monetary mechanism of Bangladesh Bank should be strengthened further so that all banks can perform equally to support all related business sectors.

The MPS does not provide for any credit allocation between the public and private sector. Private sector investment is the driving force behind a democratic economy. In Bangladesh, private investment lifted its share from 19.3% of GDP in

FY08 to 19.6% in FY 09 (ADB estimates), reflecting improves in business confidence. On the other hand, the government is going ahead with its programmes of implementing projects under public private partnerships (PPP). In this context credit allocation guidelines should have been well-defined so that any increase in credit expansion to the public sector should not result in credit crunch to the private sector. Rather, the credit allocation programme should allow future expansion of private sector credit due to increased production and investment activity in the private sector.

The MPS has not taken any stance on the issue of lowering interest rate. Although some private sector banks had reduced lending rates slightly earlier, the lowering of interest rates to single digit has not been achieved. Lowering interest rates is important for lowering costs and remain in competition.

The central bank's emphasis on broadening financial inclusion through increased lending to sectors like agriculture, effluent/waste disposal, solar/biogas/other renewable energy projects through refinance supported programmes is appropriate, particularly in consideration of the need for alternative energy sources and stress on environmental issues. However, there is no mention of achieving any specific credit targets for these heads, which could be more practical in achieving progress in these areas.

Bangladesh Bank's emphasis on SME lending and refinance comes at a time when both the public and private sectors are keen for accelerated development of this sector. DCCI also held an SME Financing Fair in collaboration with the SME Foundation in December last year to bring the SME entrepreneurs and financing institutions on a common platform with a view to increasing access to finance for this sector. The BB should monitor the lending and refinance targets set by BB for this sector so that banks are induced to greater lending in this sector.

DCCI urges Chinese entrepreneurs to invest more in Bangladesh

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan has called upon the Chinese investors to invest more in a number of profitable ventures in Bangladesh. He listed textile, jute-based textile, power and energy, ICT sectors of Bangladesh as the areas where Chinese investors could invest.

Abul Kasem Khan made the call when a 12-member trade delegation from China led by Vice Governor of Sichuan Provincial People's Government Huang Xiaoxiang called on him on February 9.

The DCCI President informed the Chinese delegation that the present government of Bangladesh has announced different packages for foreign investors. He called upon the Chinese entrepreneurs to take this opportunity and invest in Bangladesh.

He also underscored the importance of reducing the present trade gap between these two friendly countries. He stressed the need for establishing direct air and land route between Bangladesh and China.

During the meeting, Abul Kasem Khan said, there is a cordial and strong trade and economic relationship between Bangladesh and China. He said, China is one of the main sources of Bangladesh for import.

Leader of the delegation Huang Xiaoxiang assured the DCCI of keeping stronger

economic ties with Bangladesh in future. He informed that establishing direct air and land route is under active consideration of the Chinese government. He invited the Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to participate in the Western China International Fair to be held in October 2010.

Senior Vice President M. Shahjahan Khan gave vote of thanks to the members of delegation.

Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik, Directors Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA, M. A. Baten, M. Bashir Ullah Bhulyan, Mahabub Anam Al-haj Md. Nasiruddin Khan, M. Anwarul Haque and K. G. Karim were present during the meeting.



DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (second from right) presenting crest to leader of the visiting Chinese delegation Huang Xiaoxiang (right) at DCCI on February 9. Senior Vice President of DCCI M. Shahjahan Khan (second from left) and Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (left) are also seen in the picture

Call to produce eco-friendly pulp and paper from jute

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan has urged all concerned to make best use of green jute by manufacturing pulp and paper. The revival of jute through innovation and diversification will create employment opportunities especially in the rural areas, he opined.

He was speaking at a national seminar organized by DCCI on Eco-Friendly Pulp and Paper Processing from Jute held at DCCI on February 23.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua was present as chief guest and Secretary General of IJSG Sudripta Roy special guest at the seminar.

The DCCI President said, in order to save and improve our climate from global warming, we need to protect our environment through use of eco-friendly products like

jute-based pulp and paper. He also called upon the government to include an 'integrated jute diversification (IJD) policy package' in the Industrial Policy.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua said, to keep our environment sound and pollution free, we should identify new green business using green and eco-friendly technology. To encourage our entrepreneurs in order to come forward to set up eco-friendly industries in Bangladesh, we have to find out appropriate ways and means, he added.

The Industries Minister assured the DCCI of the government's all-out support to the private entrepreneurs. He stressed on the diversification of jute and jute-based products to meet the demand. He mentioned that jute based paper and pulp could save our hard-earned foreign currency.

Special guest of the seminar Sudripta Roy, Secretary General of International Jute Study Group, stressed on



Industries Minister Dillip Barua (third from right) addressing a national seminar on Eco-Friendly Pulp and Paper Processing from Jute organized by DCCI at DCCI on February 23. DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (third from left), Senior Vice President M Shahjahan Khan (right), Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (left), President of ICC- Bangladesh Mahbubur Rahman (second from right) and Secretary General of International Jute Study Group Sudripta Roy (second from left) are also seen in the picture

management of supply chain, development of appropriate technology and ensuring financial viability of the green jute.

President of ICC- Bangladesh Mahbubur Rahman moderated the seminar. He said jute is a potential sector and for the development of this sector appropriate measures should be taken.

Effective negotiation skills sought

DCCI Director Mahabub Anam has laid emphasis on having proper knowledge of negotiation to become competitive and face challenges of globalization.

He was speaking at the certificate giving ceremony of a training course on "Effective Negotiation Skills" held on February 24.

Mahabub Anam said, negotiation is a process whereby two or more parties, with differing views initially, attempt to reach an agreement on a common objective by selective use of different methods of persuasion. In most cases, improved negotiation performance can lead to achieving lower overall cost of supply, better quality, shorter lead-times, effective implementation of contract, improved supplier reliability and service and fewer disputes.

A senior representative of participants indicated that initially he had doubts about the outcome of the course but sincerely admitted that they had learnt a lot. While thanking DCCI Business Institute for the unique course, he

DCCI former President Hossain Khaled pleaded for opening up scope of jute farming in neighboring countries as joint ventures as Bangladesh has limited cultivable land.

Former Director General of BJRI Dr. A B M Abdullah presented the key note paper.

Chairman of Nitol Group Abdul Matlub Ahmed, Principal Scientific Officer of BJRI Dr. Monjurul Alam and former Project Leader of IJSG Dr. Golam Mohiuddin were present as panelist discussants

DCCI former President M H Rahman, Director M Bashir Ullah Bhuiyan, Chairman of Seed Multiplication Foundation Dr. M A Sobhan, Proprietor of Brothers Paper and Board Ltd. Shahid Hossain and Director of Janata Jute Mills Limited Fazlul Huq Bhuiya and entrepreneur Sharif M Afzal Hossain took part in the open discussion.

Senior Vice President M. Shahjahan Khan, Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik, Directors Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA, Major Md. Yead Ali Fakir (Retd.), Waqar Ahmad Choudhury, Nessar Maksud Khan, Al-haj Md. Nasiruddin Khan, M. Anwarul Haque, Md. Sirajul Islam, M. S. Shekil Chowdhury, former President M A Momen, former Senior Vice President Ashraf Ibn Noor, former Vice Presidents Syed Toufiq Ali and Kh. Shahidul Islam were present.

said that they were highly pleased in getting the opportunity to acquire practical and useful knowledge of negotiation skills from very experienced resource persons. This has created an urge to know more and would help them attain long term success in business adding that the duration of the course may be increased in future.

Executive Director, DBI Md. Hossain Ali said, learning will be effective only if they apply their acquired knowledge of negotiation in their day- to-day activities. He assured that their pertinent recommendations would be duly considered to make the module more effective in future. He informed that there are 49 short-term courses/workshops in DBI Training Calendar, 2010, apart from medium-term Certificate/Diploma courses on Supply Chain Management and long-term, BBA and EMBA Courses. Md. Shamsuddin Azad, Deputy Secretary (Training) coordinated the session.

Twenty seven senior participants from prominent private and public sector organizations participated in the course. At the end, the chief guest awarded certificates to the participants.

ADP slashed by 6.6 per cent

The revised Annual Development Programme (ADP) has been reduced by 6.6 percent from the original ADP bringing its size down to Tk 28,500 crore due to failure in implementation.

The Awami League-led government increased the original ADP by 33 pc from the last one and set its size at Tk 30,500 crore to meet the huge demand for public investment. The revised ADP was approved in a National Economic Council (NEC) meeting at its auditorium with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

As the cash budget support increased in the revised ADP, the share of foreign resources has been made 58 percent (Tk 16,500 cr), which was 51 percent in the original ADP. The cash budget support increased by 48 percent and stood at Tk 5,180 crore which is mostly provided by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

In the revised ADP, fund of the foreign-aided projects has been slashed by 12 percent (Tk 11,300 crore) due to their failure in implementation. The government's policy is to reduce the number of projects and lay more emphasis on implementation. But in the revised ADP, the number of projects is 1,058, which was 886 in the original one.

Meanwhile, 464 projects have been kept without allocation in view of allocating fund to the projects approved in the next four months. A lump sum allocation of Tk 571 crore has been kept for this purpose.

Another policy of the government is to make more allocation to projects to achieve the goal quickly. In the original ADP, 346 projects were embarked upon for completion while the number of projects was brought down to 237 in the revised ADP.

Due to failure in implementation, allocations to power sector has been reduced by 28 percent while 8 percent in health sector, 14 percent in transport and 18 percent in physical infrastructure, water supply and public works sector.

However, allocations to a good number of sectors have been increased, as their rate of implementation was good. In the revised ADP the allocation for oil, gas and natural resources went up by 26 percent while for water resources 34 pc, rural development and rural institutions 10 pc, agriculture 5 pc, and education 3 pc.

The highest allocation of 14.94 percent (Tk 4,258 cr) went to education and religious affairs, 13.82 pc (Tk 3,939 cr) to rural development and rural institutions, and 13.61 pc (Tk 3,878 cr) to transport sector. After the NEC

meeting, Planning Minister AK Khandker told journalists that the prime minister had directed all secretaries to ensure 100 percent implementation of the revised ADP.

The PM also directed them to appoint efficient and honest persons as project directors and ensure that the project directors stay in the project area, the minister added.

Khandker also said, this year the revised ADP has been approved a bit earlier so that it is implemented properly. The project implementation would be monitored continuously.

He said if any ministry lagged behind in implementing the projects their allocations would be cut and the share would be given to those, which were ahead in the implementation process. In the first seven months of the current fiscal year 35 percent of the original ADP has been implemented whereas in the corresponding period of last fiscal year 31 pc were implemented.

A high official of the planning ministry said the implementation of Tk 28,500 crore revised ADP would not be possible. However, in the first six months of the current fiscal year only Tk 8,807 crore could be spent. In the last fiscal year the size of the revised ADP was Tk 23,000 crore but finally Tk 19,701 crore could be spent.

New directives to expedite ADP implementation issued

The government has issued nine new directives to accelerate the pace of implementation of development projects and end the constant failure to attain hundred per cent of the goals of the Annual Development Programme.

Mid-term review of ADP implementation and redistribution of budgetary resources, as well as punishing officials responsible for the failure to implement the projects, have been identified as the key steps for improving the situation, according to the Finance Ministry.

Only 29 per cent of the Tk 30,500 crore ADP has been utilised in the first six months of this fiscal year. The Finance Ministry has issued a circular on ADP implementation, asking 49 ministries and divisions to improve their capacity to attain 100 per cent of budgetary goals, especially the development objectives of the government.

'Such issues [of ADP implementation] and capacity of ministries and divisions will come up for discussion at the National Economic Council's meeting that is scheduled to held in the third week of this month,' a senior official of the Finance Ministry said.

Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Abdul Aziz told the other secretaries considered the chief accounting officers of ministries that they must work hard to implement at least 95 per cent of the ADP this fiscal year, at a meeting.

Accountability of those responsible for implementation of the development projects will also be discussed at the council's meeting in the light of the Public Money and Budget Management Act 2009, said Finance Ministry sources. As per the government's data, the foreign affairs ministry has spent 0 per cent of its total annual allocation, the civil aviation ministry 1 per cent, liberation war affairs ministry 2 per cent, shipping ministry 14 per cent, defence ministry 9 per cent, water resources ministry 18 per cent, Public Service Commission 7 per cent, law ministry 4 per cent, housing and public works ministry 4 per cent and Anti-Corruption Commission 14 per cent.

The Finance Ministry has also recommended creation of a 'pool fund' for utilization of ADP's foreign fund portion, and the Planning Commission and IMED will give special directives for implementation of the ADP. Ministries and divisions will take necessary measures for implementation of ADP projects. Besides the ministries will now have to make work plans for implementation of the development projects.

More than half of financial year gone but no PPP policy finalized

A block allocation of Tk 2,500 crore has been made in the budget for utilization under public-private partnership (PPP) projects but none of the money was used during the first half of the fiscal year to the frustration of the policy makers. Nor the government has yet finalized policy to implement PPP projects, admitted the officials.

The allocation was intended for funding infrastructure projects in different sectors including power, energy, roads and tourism in collaboration with private sector. It came in the wake of keen interest shown by local and foreign entrepreneurs to invest in infrastructure development in collaboration of the government as in other developing countries.

Announcing the PPP fund allocation in the national budget, Finance Minister AMA Muhith had assured forming PPP utilization policy within 3 months. But no policy could be formed during the last seven months since the budget was adopted. Muhith recently expressed frustration at the slow process of PPP policy making.

Relevant officials told that the Finance Ministry prepared a draft policy which was placed at the cabinet meeting in

September. The cabinet referred it to the Board of Investment (BoI) for a review and make necessary changes. BoI now under the Prime Minister's office is sitting on the policy, without any tangible progress.

"Actually, right at this moment, we've nothing to do but to wait for the policy to be prepared by the BoI", a senior official said. He said as soon as the policy is available, all ministries will be asked to submit projects for implementation under PPP.

Power projects need quick implementation, say donors

Development partners have pushed the government for quick project implementation, energy audit, and public-private partnership initiative for power projects. In the energy and power session of Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting in Dhaka, the government presented an investment requirement of \$9.5 billion for the sector and the donors made the suggestions.

According to the officials who were present at the session, the development partners said the biggest obstacle in the power sector was implementation. The tender process takes much time and the donors urged the government to expedite the process.

Power Division Secretary Abul Kalam Azad presented a detailed plan on strategy, priorities and next steps for the energy and power sector. On behalf of the development partners, ADB Director General Sultan Hafiz Rahman and German representative Christiane Hieronymus spoke at the session.

The Prime Minister's Energy and Power Adviser Dr. Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and State Minister for Power and Energy Brig Gen (retd) Md Enamul Huq replied to different queries from the development partners. They told the development partners that the government would require \$9.5 billion for generating around 7,000 megawatt power and transmission and distribution in the next six years.

The government also presented detailed plans on financing the projects, and focused on the plan for cross-border cooperation in the power sector. The development partners were told that the government initiated move to address the power crisis by importing electricity from the neighbouring countries. Recently, India and Bangladesh have reached understanding on power trade. It is expected that power trade with India in the range of 250 MW to 500 MW will be possible in the next 24 months.

Chris Austin, country director of UK Department for International Development (DFID) and co-chair of Local Consultative Group, told journalists that various institutions are working for development of power and energy sector.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission should be strengthened, he said. Austin hailed the government move to produce power through public-private partnership. Grid connectivity with Nepal, Bhutan and India is a welcome move, he added. He also said the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank and Japan would invest in the PPP initiative for power projects. The government plans to form an energy and power fund for investment in the sector.

The development partners suggested the government conduct a detailed audit to detect the huge wastage of power, energy and gas. The gas used by Power Development Board for electricity generation is almost double than the requirement.

Export diversity suggested

The development partners also called upon the government to diversify exports and ensure regular supply of energy and good infrastructure for the industries to expedite development. "The dominance of apparels in Bangladesh's export sector makes it vulnerable. Export diversification is needed. And the more labour intensive the new industries are, the better they can address the challenges of employment generation and poverty reduction," said Renata Dessallien, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh at Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) 2010.

Frozen foods, jute, leather and shipbuilding have shown potential, she said, adding that other industries should also expand. These industries need access to working capital at affordable interest rates, skilled workers and lower costs of doing business, Dessallien said.

Dessallien was speaking at the technical session on 'Development Strategies, Governance and Human Development', the first session of the BDF, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka. Finance Minister AMA Muhith chaired the session, while Dr Shamsul Alam, a member of planning commission presented a keynote on the topic.

Bangladesh can increase private investment by redoubling efforts to simplify the regulatory framework and create environment conducive to doing business, said Ellen Goldstein, World Bank (WB) country director for Bangladesh.

The other solution is to increase public investment from its current low level, Goldstein said. The government must overcome persistent weakness in revenue 1953'

generation, she said. "By global and regional standards, Bangladesh just doesn't collect enough taxes and if you don't have revenues, you cannot spend them on priority development objectives. This is also a main reason for Bangladesh's continued reliance on foreign aid," Goldstein said.

Later, at a media briefing on the topic of the first session, the finance minister said the development partners wanted to know about raising revenue, strengthening the local government, implementation efficiency, civil services reforms and population control steps. Muhith said the development partners also wanted to know about the weak statistical data, gender development, nutrition and maternal mortality rate, domestic violence and reduction in corruption.

"The development partners have seriously discussed all these issues, especially civil service reforms, reduction in corruption, malnutrition and maternal mortality rate for assisting Bangladesh," Muhith said. At the briefing, Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Mashiur Rahman said the government would set up information centre in every Union Parishad to help local people know about Bangladesh and their own Union Parishad. "The government will do so to ensure accountability and transparency," he said.

Chris Austin, co-chair of Local Consultative Group, said the development partners have promised record-level resources for Bangladesh. He said they have urged the government to reduce poverty, integrate their proposals in the next five-year plans, and work for civil service reforms act and a joint collaboration strategy between the government and development partners.

Economic Relations Division Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said a 'joint alignment' between the government and development partners would be formed by June to avert any overlapping in development assistance. Planning Minister AK Khondaker also spoke.

Government to amend anti-hoarding law

With prices of essentials surging continuously in last three months, the government is planning to amend the anti-hoarding law for taking stern action against unscrupulous traders, official sources said.

'We have examined the possibilities of amending and upgrading the existing anti-hoarding law for controlling the abnormal price hike of essentials,' Commerce Ministry Additional Secretary Mustafa Mohinddin said after an inter-ministerial meeting. The Ministries of Law, Food and Home Affairs have been asked to prepare their respective reports on the amendment of the 'The Essential Articles (Price Control and Anti-Hoarding)

and submit them before the next inter-ministerial meeting, he added.

Mustafa said that they would also invite business associations to give opinion on the amendment after the meeting. Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on Commerce Ministry Lutful Hye said the concerned ministries have been asked to control dishonest business syndicates by any means and enact strong laws against them.

The committee after a meeting has asked the officials to go tough against the syndicates, no matter who they were and what their identities were, Hye added. The retail price of coarse rice increased by Tk 12 per kilogram while the retail price of lentils went up by Tk 15 per kilogram in last three months, market sources said.

Consumers, especially people from lower and middle income groups, are finding difficulties because of soaring prices of essential commodities. The past interim government also wanted to amend the law and prepared a proposal defining the amount and period for hoarding of nine essential items like paddy, rice, wheat, lentil, sugar, edible oil, onion, milk powder and baby food, sources added.

The caretaker government suggested the hoarding period for traders would be maximum 30 days, but the business associations wanted the time limit to be 120 days. Earlier, a Commerce Ministry draft had divided hoarding into three levels –import, wholesale and retail – and proposed highest one month for storage at each level.

PM urges Kuwaiti business to import more from Bangladesh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged Kuwaiti business leaders and entrepreneurs to import world-class products from Bangladesh and make investment in the country's promising sectors under an attractive package of incentives. 'In fact, there is ample scope for diversifying and increasing our two-way trade. We only need to work together to identify areas of cooperation to harness the existing potential,' she told her audience at a luncheon meeting hosted by Kuwait Chamber of Commerce in her honour.

The Prime Minister went to Kuwait on a three-day state visit to the oil-rich Gulf state with a wide range of matters of bilateral cooperation on her agenda, especially development assistance, investment and labour issues. The chairman of the apex trade body, Ali Mohammad Thunayan Al-Ganim, delivered the welcome address.

The Prime Minister said Kuwait could import from Bangladesh high-quality garments, ceramics and pharmaceuticals which have been established as popular items in the developed world.

The other items she put on offer which also have equal recognition in an increasingly environment-conscious world, are finished leather and leather products, furniture, handicrafts, particularly jute and jute products. Hasina said another important area of immense possibility was investment by the state of Kuwait in Bangladesh. 'Our government has been successful in creating an attractive investment climate with liberal fiscal and financial policies.'

She listed the significant facilities on stake for investment, like tax holiday, concessionary duty on imported machinery, avoidance of double taxation, remittance of royalty, technical know-how, technical assistance fee, allowing 100 per cent foreign equity, unrestricted exit policy, and full repatriation of capital and capital gains in the event of exit.

She said Kuwaiti investors could seriously consider investing in power, telecommunications, infrastructure development, pharmaceutical, textiles, ICT, real estate, gas and energy, leather, furniture, and agro-based industry sectors. 'I invite you to come forward with investments in Bangladesh, which would be lucrative, as well as assist in strengthening even further our countries' relations.' She said the two states were bound by brotherly ties based on common faith, culture and tradition.

In his speech the KCCI chief highly praised Hasina's leadership, especially in dealing with the challenges of security and development. He wouldn't deny that the size of trade exchange and the level of economic cooperation between two countries by far fall short of reflecting the depth of the Islamic bonds of two nations and brotherly relations among the leaders of both countries. 'Neither do I deny that the responsibility of changing it is a matter of our joint interest. It is our sincere hope that your visit will mark an encouraging start for all of us to bear out responsibilities,' the Kuwaiti business leader said.

He mentioned that the meeting gave a very valuable opportunity for both countries for cooperation in the fields of trade and investment in the best interests of both the countries.

Business confidence picking up, says IFC

Business confidence and investment have been picking up since October last year, according to a survey conducted by International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group. "Business confidence improved in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2009 and is expected to sustain in Q1 of 2010. Investment also picked up during the period," it reveals. The report said investment confidence also marked a boost in Q1 of 2010.

The Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund (BICF), managed by IFC, conducted the survey in partnership with the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Union (EU). The report, 'IFC-BICF Business Confidence Survey, Q4'09-Q1'10: A Reflection on Business Sentiments,' was released at the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI). BICF and International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) jointly organised the programme.

The survey covered about 1,440 businesses across the country to measure their investment, employment, profitability and overall performances during July-September and October-December, 2009 quarters, and their expectations for the January-March, 2010.

BICF conducts the survey on a quarterly basis to check the pulse of the business environment. The report shows that the firms surveyed performed better in Q4'09 and it is expected to improve further in Q1'10 with similar pattern across sectors and sizes. Overall performances tended to be better in Sylhet, Dhaka, Chittagong and Barisal compared to Rajshahi and Khulna, while outlook for Q1'10 shows promising for all locations, it said.

Business leaders, prominent economists, key private sector players, civil society representatives and government officials were present at the function to share the results of the survey and stimulate discussions on how to broaden the appeal of business reforms.

Business leaders however said energy and infrastructure constraints pose a potential threat towards development. ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman said industrial sector has to grow further to foster the country's economic growth. "But smooth supply of energy is a basic requirement for boosting up the industrial growth," said Rahman. "Energy and infrastructure constraints have now become a major problem for the country's industrial development."

Former adviser to the caretaker government Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said the survey result will help the businesses know what is happening currently and

subsequently it will be conveyed to the policymakers. The economist also echoed the businesses regarding energy shortage that poses a great threat to the investment scenario. Addressing the function as chief guest, Board of Investment Executive Chairman Dr SA Samad said shortage in the energy sector has paved the way for the businessmen to come up with investment.

Samad said Bangladesh could easily grow by 8-9 percent rate by exploring its huge untapped resources. ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman informed the gathering that the chamber is going to hold an international conference on 'energy for growth' in April this year considering its importance. BICF Head James Crittle, SME Foundation Chairman Aftab-ul Islam, BKMEA President Fazlul Hoque, DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan and BFTI CEO Prof MA Taslim also spoke on the occasion.

Government keen on 30pc investment

The government is keen to increase the proportion of national investment from 23 percent of national income to about 30-35 percent. Finance Minister AMA Muhith speaking as chief guest at a seminar on Private-Public Partnership in Agriculture, Muhith said the government was looking to increase public investment through this new mechanism that he introduced in a big way when proposing the current budget in June last year.

But Muhith did not elaborate on the exact mechanism or policy through which national investment would be increased. He said, "At present our national earnings is worth some 6 lakh crore, of which 23 percent goes into investment." Muhith said regarding large projects that the was unable to take them up by itself due to its financial constraints. "But they could be implemented through PPP."

On increasing public expenditure, he said, "We spend 16 percent of our national earnings but we have a plan to spend 20 percent of national earnings by 2013-2014." The Finance Minister urged the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation to take charge of investment in agriculture through PPP. "I would suggest that BADC work on PPP-based projects in agriculture."

The government has a budgetary allocation of Tk 2500 crore for PPP. Currently three organisations are coordinating 27 projects under PPP, which mainly include infrastructure development but there are no agro-based projects among them. The minister said agriculture would remain out of PPP during the current fiscal and would likely be included in the next fiscal.

Economists for competition law to check market manipulation

The government should enact a competition law to prevent market manipulation by individuals or cartels, said economists at a function in Dhaka.

They also advised the government to conduct sector and product specific market studies regularly and develop institutional capacity for monitoring and regulating market in favour of consumers and candid traders. The Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund, a window for the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank organised the function to release two study reports at Sheraton hotel.

Commerce Minister Muhammed Faruk Khan addressed the function. Competition law expert and an IFC consultant Shyam Khemani also spoke. Summarising the studies competition issues in the trucking sector in Bangladesh and an assessment of competition in Bangladesh edible oil sector the IFC in a note said the widely used instrument of ensuring competition in the marketplace is the competition or anti-trust law.

Economist Selim Raihan of Unnayan Shamannay conducted the study on trucking sector while Helal Uddin and MA Taslim conducted the study on edible oil sector. The IFC note mentioned that although the enactment of a competition law had been mulled for years in Bangladesh, no such law has been enacted. 'It is essential that such a law should be enacted to address the problem of anti-competitive practices,' it observed.

The trucking sector study found that competition varies in the trucking industry in different routes and for different types of trucks. The study, however, concluded that trucking market was not competitive as there remained significant barriers to enter there. The edible oil industry study found fewer players in Bangladesh's market and prices are linked with international prices.

'Local prices may not necessarily be due to cartels or syndicates,' said the study, which pointed out that speculation like anticompetitive element is there in the market to influence price fluctuations. Shyam Khemani said sector specific investigation and product specific market studies are necessary.

He said the government or consumers get no help if anyone reaches at the 'unsubstantiated conclusion' that the market syndicates operate. Stressing on the need for researchers to do specific and reliable studies on the impact of illegal toll collection, Commerce Minister Muhammed Faruk Khan said, 'We are yet to trace significant presence of toll collectors but we are keeping watch on such elements.' Syed Akter Mahmood, senior program manager at the BICF said they had targeted

studies to help government in formulating policies to improve functioning of the market of essential commodities.

Pakistan urged to waive high duty on jute goods

President Md. Zillur Rahman said Pakistan could take steps to waive high tariff on the import of jute goods, particularly jute bags from Bangladesh to reduce the trade gap between the two countries.

"There are ample opportunities of enhancing bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan by utilising the business potential between the two countries," he said while Pakistan's newly appointed High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ashraf Qureshi presented his credentials to him at Bangabhaban.

During the meeting, Rahman said Bangladesh attaches high importance to congenial relations between the South Asian countries to promote regional peace, stability and development. The president and the Pakistani envoy also discussed various issues related to bilateral cooperation and mutual interests. The new envoy said Pakistan has proposed Bangladesh to hold foreign-secretary level meeting and joint economic commission meeting of the two countries to identify new sectors of cooperation for further increasing trade and commerce relations between the two countries.

Qureshi also said that during his tenure in Dhaka he would try to convince his country to waive the high tariff on the import. He also sought the president's all-out cooperation to discharge his new responsibilities.

Turkey wants to increase trade with Bangladesh

The conditions for economic development of any country depend on political stability and security, the Turkish President said in Dhaka. President Abdullah Gul said the responsibilities of political leaders are to guarantee fundamental rights of the citizen in a democratic environment and to foster economic growth so that the people can prosper. 'Our only job is to ensure these goals,' he said during a meeting with the Bangladeshi business community.

Bangladesh and Turkey need to bolster ties through increased trade and investment, Gul told the meeting. He called upon Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to consider investing in Turkey, saying that his country already has invested significantly in Bangladesh's textile sector. 'Joint venture initiatives in a third country can be also considered,' he said.

Organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the meeting was held at the Sonargaon Hotel in a bid to facilitate discussions among the business leaders of the two countries.

'The time has now come to transform this friendship into a relation that will bring mutual benefit to the peoples of both countries,' the Turkish president said.

Gul, who arrived in Dhaka on a state visit, was accompanied by a delegation comprised mainly of Turkish businessmen. On the potential of bilateral trade between the countries, Gul reiterated that it can be doubled. 'Bilateral trade between the two countries has already grown to almost \$600 million, but it can go up to more than a billion.'

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, FBCCI President Annisul Huq and Rifat Hisarciklioglu, president for the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey also spoke in the breakfast meeting.

FBCCI and Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey signed a cooperation agreement to foster development and diversification of trade and economic cooperation on a mutually advantageous basis between their members. FBCCI President Annisul Huq and TOBB President M Rifat Hisarciklioglu signed the agreement in presence of Turkish president Abdullah Gul at a breakfast meeting at Sonargaon Hotel.

Under the agreement, the two federations will exchange information on the state of their economies, economic legislation and commercial tradition in their respective countries to develop the economic relations. They will undertake reciprocal visits and discuss issues of mutual interest beyond trade such as joint ventures, foreign investments and transfer of technologies. They will also encourage trade promotion activities with exchange of trade missions and participation in trade fair and make preparation for establishment of Turkish-Bangladesh Business Council.

At the function, RHEAR, a Turkish company, signed an MoU with its Bangladeshi counterpart DANA to offer \$1 billion in soft loan to the Bangladesh government to finance infrastructure projects like flyovers and bridges. If the government accepts the credit line, RHEAR will donate \$5 million to healthcare and education projects in Bangladesh.

Record turnout of visitors, sales at DITF

The 15th Dhaka International Trade Fair ended with a record turnout of visitors and sales volume. The concluding ceremony of the fair, which was initially planned to run for a month but later the duration was extended by a week more, was told at least four million people had visited the fair and the export orders amounted to Tk 30 crore and local sales volume to several hundred crores of taka.

Commerce Minister Muhammad Faruk Khan attended as chief guest the ceremony, presided over by M Shahabullah, vice-president of the Export Promotion Bureau which organised the fair. Commerce Secretary Gulam Hossain and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Annisul Huq also spoke. 'A record turnout of visitors and sales volume indicate that the confidence of businessmen is increasing,' said Faruk Khan.

He assured businesses that the government would extend all possible supports as industry and productions would expand further and cost of finance would go down. 'The government hopes the rate of bank interest on industrial financing will go down to a single digit in three to four years,' the Commerce Minister said.

Khan said the government was planning to build a permanent exhibition centre. The permanent exhibition centre, to be set up at a cost of Tk 300 crore, will span 10 million square feet. The Export Promotion Bureau organised the annual trade fair at a temporary venue at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Four hundred and seventy-six organisations, including 28 companies from 10 foreign countries, attended the fair.

'We are yet to compile the local sales data but the volume might be several hundred crores of taka,' said an EPB Director. Annisul Huq said if they were provided with infrastructure and policy supports, the private sector could help the country to achieve even 8 per cent GDP growth.

Annisul said some local exhibitors displayed and sold imported products although they were supposed to trade in only local products. He requested the organiser to take steps against such sales of imported items by local exhibitors in future. Towards the end of the ceremony, Faruk Khan distributed trophies among companies having best decorated stalls in the fair.

Scope for further trade with Bangladesh: Wal-Mart CEO

There has been 'exciting development' of Wal-Mart's relationship with Bangladesh, an important sourcing destination in recent times, and there is still huge scope for further development, said Doug McMillon President and Chief Executive Officer of Wal-Mart International. 'Exciting developments have taken place in recent times in the relations between Wal-Mart and Bangladesh's apparel industry,' McMillon told newsmen.

The world's one of the most talked-about Chief Executive Officers talked with newsmen after a long meeting at Radisson with three top leaders of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. He said that his company attaches great importance to 'social and environmental sustainability' in its trade with Bangladesh.

'There is huge scope,' McMillon replied when he was asked about the possibility of increased procurement from Bangladesh by Wal-Mart in the immediate future. McMillon, who looks much younger than his age (42), graduated in Business Administration from the University of Arkansas and did his post-graduation from the University of Tulsa. He resides near the Wal-Mart headquarters in Bentonville with his wife and two sons.

McMillon, who became Wal-Mart's President on January 7, said that the textile industries in Bangladesh have improved tremendously in the last five years or so.

'I have been involved with merchandising for Wal-Mart for 15 years so I have much knowledge of, and interest in, Bangladesh's apparel industry,' he said.

Wal-Mart is keenly observing the development of infrastructure in Bangladesh as this issue is the organisation's top priority when it wants to assess the reliability of the supply chain.

'We are observing how the government here is dealing with infrastructure issue especially energy and other utilities,' said McMillon. Infrastructure development is vital for efficient and uninterrupted operation of the apparel industries, especially for ensuring uninterrupted large-volume supply to Wal-Mart and other giant retailers, he said.

'It [increase of prices] is related with many issues adding more value to products, improving efficiency and many other things,' said McMillon when he was asked what he thinks about the Bangladesh garment factories' demand for higher prices.

He flew to Dhaka on his executive jet and visited some factories that day and had meetings with local officials of

Wal-Mart. McMillon went to Wal-Mart's Dhaka office and before flying off at 12.30pm he had a series of meetings with his colleagues in Dhaka and Wal-Mart's sourcing partners. The Wal-Mart officials here tried to pass off McMillon's Dhaka visit as a courtesy call but industry analysts say that the whirlwind Dhaka tour by the top man of the world's number one company has enormous significance.

Many analysts pointed out the visit may have something to do with the post-recession sourcing strategy of the Wal-Mart and also the cooling US-China trade relations. A member of McMillon's entourage and senior Wal-Mart supply chain official said that Bangladesh, after China, is now being considered by Wal-Mart to be the most significant sourcing destination.

Informed sources said that nearly 45 per cent of Bangladesh's apparel shipments to the USA end up in Wal-Mart's stores and also 15 per cent of its shipments to the European Union. With shipments valued over \$3.5 billion, the USA is the single largest market for Bangladeshi garments. The EU countries imported nearly 60 per cent of Bangladesh's garments, valued at nearly \$8 billion, last year.

Wal-Mart sources part of its procurements directly from selected suppliers while rest is sourced through domestic importers which are known as buying houses.

Cuisine training centres needed to get 30,000 UK jobs

Setting up of cuisine training institutes in the country could open up a new opportunity of huge overseas jobs with handsome salaries for Bangladeshi youths as the British curry industry has now a demand for 30,000 skilled cooks and kitchen staffs.

'The globally-acclaimed UK's curry industry is now suffering from the shortage of cooks and kitchen staffs. Bangladesh could easily take over the opportunity if cuisine training institutes are set up,' President of the UK-based Bangladesh Caterers Bajloor Rashid said in an interview.

He said considering the industry's substantial contribution to the UK's economy, the British government has of late simplified the immigration rules allowing foreign skilled kitchen staffs to Britain. The shortage occupation list has been amended in the simplification after BCA's strong lobby with the British government that paved the way of recruiting foreign kitchen staffs, he said.

Asked about the reason behind the shortage of employees, he said post of cooks and kitchen staffs went on retirement and some others are going to be retired in the curry industry in the UK. The BCA has decided to replace the vacant posts with young and energetic people but there is a compulsion of necessary training on cooks and kitchen.

Thus, he said, setting up cuisine training institutes is inevitable to cater the demand for cook staffs sooner than the other competing countries such as India and Pakistan in the Britain. Rashid, however, recommended the government to take steps to set up training institutes through the initiative of the public private partnership.

There can be a state-level bilateral accord to take over the jobs in the UK's curry industry and if the government come forward to initiate the process of setting up cuisine training institutes through the PPP, the BCA is ready to cooperate with the government in doing so, said BCA chief. The BCA at its own initiative has undertaken a plan to set up a training institute dubbed 'London School of Curry (LSC) in the UK' and which already got the UK government's approval.

Rashid also advocated that the government initially set up training institute with introduction of two years course so that intending Bangladeshi graduates could study in the LSC on completion of one-and-a-half year in the proposed government-run training institute.

Apparel export to Japan posts 140pc growth

Exports of Bangladeshi apparels to Japan saw 140 per cent growth last year as Japanese importers further increased their sourcing from Bangladesh. Quoting a Japan Ministry of Finance report, officials at the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) informed that in 2009, US\$ 125 million worth of apparels had been shipped from Bangladesh to Japan against a shipment worth US\$ 52 million in the previous year.

Annisul Huq, co-chairman of the JBCCI pointed out that growth in Bangladesh's apparel exports to Japan has much potential to become sustainable. 'The Japanese are coming to source more from Bangladesh in recent times while Bangladeshi exporters are actively trying to explore new markets,' said Huq, who is the incumbent President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry and former President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Takashi Suzuki, representative in Bangladesh for the Japan External Trade Organisation said the "China factor" was playing a major role in swelling the growth of Bangladesh's apparel exports to Japan.

Imported apparel market in Japan used to be dominated by China, but Japanese importers are now looking out for one more dependable source to reduce their reliance on China. 'Bangladesh has much potential as cost of garment production is lower here,' said the official of Jetro, which guides Japanese importers and investors abroad.

Industry watchers said Bangladesh's garment shipments to Japan started to swell in the middle of last year after the Japanese retail giant Uniqlo opened a sourcing office in Dhaka, prompting many other Japanese retailers to set their sight on Bangladesh.

Suzuki said that Bangladesh is the top candidate for being the next to China which has hitherto been the major apparel supplier to Japanese importers. 'Each day now, I find at least one enquiry about Bangladesh from the Japanese textile importers or investors.'

'Japanese are now convinced that having decades of experience in supplying to the vast EU and US markets, Bangladesh's apparel industry is now skilled enough to cater to customers in other regions,' said Suzuki. Pointing out that the Japan market is very quality consciousness than other markets, Suzuki said, 'Japanese businessmen follow different ways of business and the Bangladeshi exporters should try to understand the Japan market.'

The report showed that Japanese importers procured \$ 26.5 billion worth of apparels and accessories from overseas sources with China having the lion's share of more than 80 per cent of shipments. Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar and India are the next significant sources for Japanese apparel importers, but the growth of apparel imports from Bangladesh has been stunning, industry analysts observed.

Bangladesh offers untapped potential for NRIs for investment

A seminar on "Investment Opportunities in Bangladesh for the NRIs: Untapped Potentials" was held at the Bangabandhu auditorium of Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC.

The seminar was jointly organized by the Venture Investment Partners Bangladesh Ltd. (VIPB), the AIMS of Bangladesh and CMSL Securities Ltd. in collaboration with the Bangladesh Embassy, according to a message received in Dhaka. The event was co-hosted by the American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers and Architects (AABEA), Washington DC chapter.

Speaking on the occasion, Akramul Qader, Bangladesh Ambassador to USA informed the audience that pursuing vigorous diaspora diplomacy is one of the priority areas of the embassy. He added that Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina outlined a vision for making Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and channeling foreign investment is a vital component of that vision.

While urging the NRBs to invest more in their country of origin, Ambassador Qader narrated the policy incentives of the new democratic government of Bangladesh. He also shared his experience about the just-concluded Road Show held in New York, which generated tremendous interest among a large number of US companies particularly in the energy and power sector.

The Ambassador also called upon the non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) to come forward to attain the goal of making Bangladesh a Digital one by helping materialize the vision-2021 envisioned by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. He assured all possible support from the embassy in Washington, and the Consulates General in New York and Los Angeles for any initiative from the NRBs.

Dr. Zia Ahmed, Chairman-VIPB, Zahidus Salam Mia (Dipok), Director, the Aims, Hafiz Chowdhury, Director, CSML Securities Ltd. also spoke on the occasion. In their presentations, the CEOs of the investment houses briefed the audience about their companies, the projects undertaken by them in different areas in Bangladesh and on the ways the expatriates could invest in Bangladesh in collaboration with their companies.

In his keynote speech, Dr. Zia elaborated, among others, on how the NRBs could invest in Bangladesh and there by engage in a win-win project in Bangladesh.

Dr. Zia narrated on how his projects are helping ordinary farmers and villagers in different parts of Bangladesh. Other speakers also enumerated on the potential of investments in Bangladesh and highlighted unmatched returns from such investments in Bangladesh. Their presentations were followed by a lively questions and answers session. A large number of expatriate Bangladeshis residing in greater Washington DC area and the embassy officials were present at the seminar.

Govt plans to open more commercial wings abroad

The Commerce Ministry has proposed to open up nine new commercial wings abroad to expand bilateral trade with the respective countries. But the majority of the existing 16 commercial wings are failing to reach the export targets, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Speaking to newsmen, Commerce Minister Muhammad Faruk Khan said the cabinet may approve the proposal soon as the government is trying to strengthen economic diplomacy with potential trade partners. Six of

the new commercial wings are likely to open in New York, Birmingham, in any country of Central Asia, South Africa, in any country of Central Africa and in Agartala, India.

"Both commerce and foreign ministries are working out the details of the proposal for approval from the cabinet," Khan said. The minister said it is true that many commercial wings fell short of the export targets. "But it was because of global recession." "I have already asked the officials of the wings to perform well," Khan added.

Exporters have limited marketing capacity and knowledge about export destinations -- the reason they could hardly exploit the potential of overseas markets, he said. The minister said the government is training both businessmen and officials of such wings to help the country widen its export markets. In the July-December period of fiscal 2008-09, the wings that missed the targets are in Moscow, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Madrid, Beijing, Yangon, New Delhi, London and Tehran.

In the same period, actual earnings from the Moscow mission were \$39.96 million against the \$43.68 million target, \$511.30 million from Paris against the target for \$555.50 million, \$1,159.89 million from Berlin against the \$1,262.92 million target, \$267.01 million from Brussels against the target for \$295.31 million and \$299.23 million from Madrid against the \$335.28 million target.

Bangladesh logged actual earnings from Beijing at \$51.26 million against the \$58.90 million target, \$3.18 million from Yangon against the target for \$5.27 million, \$154.61 million from New Delhi against the \$196.85 million target, \$790.36 million from London against the target for \$816.33 million and \$26.79 million from Tehran against the \$28.38 million target.

In the July-December period, the wings that achieved the targets are Washington, Ottawa, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai and Canberra.

The actual export earnings from the Washington Commercial Wing were \$2,169.86 million against the target for \$2,000.12 million and \$314.49 million from Ottawa against the \$297.77 million target, according to data on the July-December period of fiscal 2008-09.

In the period, the actual earnings from Tokyo were \$93.94 million against the \$93.33 million target, \$20.88 million from Kuala Lumpur against the target for \$13.65 million, \$27.83 million from Dubai against the \$25.76 million target and \$26.61 million from Canberra against the \$25.40 million target, EPB data shows.

Separate holidays fixed for shops in seven Dhaka city zones

The government has divided the capital into seven zones and fixed separate weekly holidays for shops and other business establishments in those zones as part of efforts to address the nagging traffic congestion.

The shop-owners, however, urged the authorities concerned to introduce a single-day holiday system instead of continuing the existing one and half-day shutdown, which hits their business very hard. A regular cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in the conference room of the Cabinet Division at Bangladesh Secretariat took the decision.

After the meeting, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters that the decision was taken as part of the government's efforts to ease traffic jams in the capital. It will come into effect soon, he said.

Under the government's latest decision, the markets in Zone 1 will remain closed for whole day on Fridays and for half-day on Saturdays. The zone-1 will cover Banglabazar, Farashganj, Shyambazar, Jurain, Postagola, Shyampur, Dholaipar, Genderia, Doyaganj, Dholaikhal, Mir Hazaribagh, Tipu Sultan Road, Dhupkhola, Wari, Ahsan Manjil, Lalbagh, Kotowali, Bangshal, Nababpur, Chankharpul, the southern part of Gulistan area, Joykali Mandir area and the southwestern side of Jatrabari.

The zone-2 will see full-day holiday on Saturdays and half-day holiday on Mondays and the zone will cover Rampura, Banashree, Khilgaon, Goran, a portion of Malibagh, Bashabo, Madartek, Mugda, Manda, Sabujbagh, eastern side of Kamalapur, Maniknagar, Dhalpur, Sayedabad, one part of Jatrabari, Demra, Shanir Akhra, Rayerbazar and Dhania.

The markets will remain closed for the whole day on Thursdays and for half-day on Fridays in the zone-3, which covers the areas of New Market, Eskaton, Moghbazar, Baily Road, Siddheshwari, Malibagh, Shajahanpur, Shaheedbagh, Shantibagh, Fakirapul, Paltan, Motijheel, Tikatuli, Gopibagh, Arambagh, Dilkusha, Segunbagicha, Bijoynagar, Topkhana Road, Press Club, High Court Mazar, northern side of Gulistan, Ramna Park, Suhrawardy Park, Shishu Park, Dhaka University and Eden College area.

The markets and other business establishments in the zone-4, which covers Karwan Bazar, Hatirpul, Manik Mia Avenue, Razabazar, Indira Road, Monipuripara, Tejturibazar, Farmgate, a portion of Tejgaon, Nilkhet, Katabon, Elephant Road, Kalabagan, Shukrabad, Sobhanbagh, New Elephant Road, Dhanmondi, Hajaribagh, Zigatola, Pilkhana and a part of Lalmafia

area, will remain closed for the whole day on Tuesdays and for half-day on Wednesdays.

For the zone-5 the full-day and half-day holidays will be on Thursdays and Fridays respectively. The zone will cover Mohammadpur, Adabor, Shyamoli, Gabtoli, Mirpur- 1 and 2, Mirpur Mazar and Stadium area, Dhaka Zoo area, Technical, Kalyanpur, Asadgate and Lalmafia areas.

In the areas under zone-6 the full-day and half-day holidays will on Saturdays and Sundays and the zone will cover Agargaon, Taltola, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Sewrapara, Kazipara, Pallabi, Mirpur-11, 12, 13 and 14, Ibrahimpur, Kachukhet, Kafrul, Mohakhali new and old DOHS, Kakoli, Tejgaon Old Airport area, Cantonment, Gulshan-1 and 2, Banani, Mohakhali Commercial Area and Mohakhali Inter-City Bus Terminal area.

In the Zone-7 the full-day holiday will be on Wednesdays and the half-day holiday on Thursdays and the zone will cover Middle and North Badda, Jagannathpur, Bashundhara Residential Area, Satarkul, Kuril, Nikunja-1 and 2, Khilkhet, North Dokkhinkhan, Joar Sahara, Ashkona, the entire Uttara Model Town, Kuril to southern side of Tongi Bridge and Airport Road area.

On a half-day holiday, markets and businesses will remain open up to 2:00pm and during a working day those will remain open until 8:00pm as usual. Although the shop-owners supported the government's zone-wise separate holidays, they said the one and half-day holidays would only continue to affect their business and invite harassments at the hands of labour inspectors.

"One and half-day holidays are almost equal to two-day holidays as preparations for opening and closing the shops require a lot of time," said Helal Uddin, President of Dhaka Mohanagar Dokan Malik Samity, a trade body of 250,000 shop-owners. He feared many of the city's shop-owners might try to flout the new order and might face harassment at the hands of labour inspectors.

Helal also accused the authorities of adopting a discriminatory policy, saying: "Many multinational companies operating in the city keep their businesses open during the whole week. Even some local shops do the same." "But most of the business centres are deprived of this opportunity," he told the reporters.

Business leaders hail

Business leaders welcomed the government's decision to divide the city markets, shopping malls and commercial establishments into seven zones with staggered weekly holidays for tackling traffic tailbacks in the capital.

In the wake of worsening traffic congestions that cost people their valuable man-hours and also upset

emergencies, the business zoning decision was taken at the regular meeting of the cabinet earlier. First Vice President of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Abul Kashem Ahmed said the implementation of the decision would help reduce traffic congestion and save electricity.

Traffic congestion hampered business activities, which ultimately affected the country's economy, he said, adding: "The government decision will have a positive impact."

Replying to a query, the FBCCI leader said there would be no negative impact in the country's businesses. Holiday-staggering was also taking place in the country's industrial sector to save electricity, he added.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) president Abdus Salam Murshedi welcomed the latest government decision as a measure to reduce traffic congestion, but was skeptical about its success. "It's a good initiative towards reducing the traffic jam, but it would be difficult to say whether it would bring success... let's us see if the decision could be properly implemented," he added.

France, Bangladesh sign 'green textiles' deal

The French have offered Bangladesh technical and financial support in a project aimed at ensuring 'green production' processes in the textile sector. French firm Callebaut de Blicquy (CDB) will implement the test-project with two member mills of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) by installing environment friendly and cost efficient machinery and helping to operate them for a year.

CDB, with two other French companies Dewailly Conseils and L'Eau Pure, will provide the technical and training support to Purbani Fabrics Ltd and Comfit Composite Knit Ltd. Laurent Estrade, trade commissioner at the French Embassy in Dhaka, on behalf of the French government took part in the signing ceremony of the agreement between CDB and Youth Group, which owns the two mills, at the BTMA office.

Laurent in his short address hoped that the pilot project would be a success. He also said the example of efficient and pollution reducing machinery should encourage other private industries to launch such initiatives. CDB will install Optilab, which will identify chemicals responsible for pollution, and a Submerged Bio-Reactor (SBR) that allows very efficient reduction of the final effluent pollution.

Nathalie Orliange, project engineer of CDB, said the Optilab would reduce dyeing time and the quantity of

chemicals by 25 percent, which would reduce pollution by 30 percent. Moreover, she said SMBR will reduce the suspension of solid materials by 99 percent. Experts from France will conduct one month training for the operators. The project cost is estimated at around 200,000 Euro, Syed Monzurul Huq, BTMA vice president told newsmen.

"If we find the pilot project successful, we'll suggest other mills to adopt the technology," he added. Laurent told. "France wants to assist in more projects in Bangladesh, especially in arsenic mitigation programmes."

Thimpu invites Dhaka to invest in power infrastructure

Bhutan has invited Bangladesh to invest in power transmission and distribution equipment, as the Himalayan kingdom looks to greatly expand electricity coverage, the Bhutanese Minister for Economic Affairs said. "There's a great demand for poles, cables, transformers in Bhutan," minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk said at a meeting with the International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB).

Wangchuk, who also served as the country's Prime Minister, was in Dhaka. The South Asian country currently produces about 15,000 MW through hydro-power plants and hopes to add another 10,000 MW within the next 10 years, he told the meeting. "We are expecting to bring at least 44,000 households under power connectivity by the next three years." Bangladesh proposed the Himalayan kingdom to export its hydro power during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit last year.

The Bhutanese Minister also expressed his country's interest for importing 'pre-engineered steel buildings' from Bangladesh. He, however, declined to specify the sectors for foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bhutan. "We will submit the revised FDI policy to our cabinet by the end of March...everything would be clear once it's accepted." Replying to a query, the Bhutanese minister also said that his country was very much keen to use the Mongla port.

He added that Bhutan would also announce Economic Development Policy very soon, which would chalk out all the details for doing business in the country. Wangchuk, as the director of Bhutan's trade and commerce department in the 80's, initiated the first trade agreement between the two countries, signed in 1980.

The deal had a provision of an automatic extension by 10 year, which was valid up to 2000. In 2003, a five-year trade agreement was signed after a lapse of three

years. The latest trade deal was signed during Hasina's Bhutan visit in last December, which increased the number of products to 90 from the previous 74 for trading between the two countries.

Under the renewed trade agreement, Tamabil of Bangladesh has been introduced as a new entry and exit point for Bhutan. Bangladesh's exports to Bhutan amount to less than \$1 million, and include garments, computer accessories, dry food, pharmaceuticals, toiletries and textile items.

On the other hand, Bhutan's exports to Bangladesh totals around \$14 million, according to the Commerce Ministry figures. Bhutan's main export items include mineral products, foodstuff, fruits, beverages and oat.

Simplification of procedures stressed to attract more FDI

Top officials of regulatory bodies at a discussion meeting in Dhaka have underlined the need for simplification of the investment procedures for attracting more foreign direct investment in the country.

The Board of Investment and Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry jointly organised the meeting on 'Foreign Investment in Bangladesh: Prospects and Challenges' at a city hotel. Chaired by BOI executive chairman Syed A Samad, the meeting was addressed, among others by the National Board of Revenue chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission chairman Syed M Yusuf Hossain and FICCI representative A Qayyum Khan.

The BOI executive member made a power point presentation on the prospects and challenges of FDI, said a BOI release. The meeting observed that attraction of FDI in the areas like infrastructure, power, energy, ICT, agro-processing and labour intensive industries are crucial.

The participants laid emphasis on simplification of the investment procedure, streamlining payment of tax and VAT, realisation of the benefits of double tax avoidance treaties, simplification of royalty remittance procedure, enforcement of contracts and consistency of the policy regime. Nasiruddin Ahmed informed the meeting that the Custom Act, VAT Act 1991 and income tax ordinance are now under review.

He assured that taxation system will be made simpler, automated and taxpayers friendly. A consultation meeting in this regard will be held soon. Syed A Samad assured all necessary supports in facilitating local and foreign investments. There is no single instance that a foreign investor made loss because of the prevailing

investment climate in Bangladesh, he said adding that the BOI will strengthen its facilitating and advocacy role for policy reforms and others areas.

NBR seeks budget proposals from all chambers, trade bodies

National Board of Revenue (NBR) has sought budget proposals from all chambers, trade associations, professionals, research organisations and think-tanks by March 7 next.

The board will start pre-budget discussions with chambers and other stakeholders from last week of February. Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI), Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh, Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) and other chambers of divisional cities will submit their budget proposals directly. Other chambers of district towns will give their proposals through FBCCI.

NBR also sought proposals from Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), other exporters and importers associations and trade associations.

It has also sought opinions of Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), registered customs, VAT and Income tax advisers, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and other research organisation and experts.

The proposals should be sent to NBR first secretary (budget coordination) Anwar Hossain. Officials said the government has taken an early move to start work on budget for 2010-2011. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance has started compiling information for preparing economic review-2010 incorporating macro economic growth and socio-economic development of the country in 2009-2010.

The finance division recently asked the revenue board to furnish necessary information by February 20. It has sought revenue collection target, different programmes, and comparative study of actual growth of last ten years - from 1999-2010. The MoF also sought detailed information about economic policy reform, poverty alleviation, micro-finance, privatisation, information technology development, climate change, comparative study of SAARC countries tariff structure.

Indian farm outlook brightens

India's farm output in 2009/10 fiscal year will be higher than initial estimates, raising prospects that food inflation, which has soared in recent months, will soon be controlled, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said recently. Singh also said India was likely to grow at 7.5 per cent for the fiscal year ending March, at a faster clip than the 6.7 per cent economic expansion recorded for the previous year.

The food price index rose an annual 17.56 per cent in late January, just ahead of the Reserve Bank setting the stage for rate hikes by raising banks' cash reserve requirements more than what markets had been expecting.

As persistently high food prices spill over into broader inflation and stoke public anger, government officials and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are walking a fine line between controlling prices and nurturing the recovering economy. Singh told a conference of chief ministers of states that provincial governments should improve data collection as gloomy forecasts after 2010 saw the worst monsoon in 37 years had raised inflationary expectations.

'This year the initial data made available by states showed much less production than what the states' latest estimates show,' Singh said. The government is expected to issue the latest crop estimates next week. In November, the government said the country's summer-sown rice output would fall 18 per cent, while cane production would drop 9 per cent a forecast that raised the spectre of higher food prices and large imports of sugar and rice.

'As expectations play a very big role in determining food prices, the initial low expectation, therefore, also contributed to the price increase,' the Prime Minister said. Singh said the prospects of winter-sown crops were also bright, further improving the supply situation. 'Post-monsoon rains have been good. All this augurs well for our ability to stabilise food prices at a reasonable level,' he said.

Rising food prices have given opposition parties ammunition against the federal coalition, which was voted back to power last year on the back of strong support in rural areas, where farmers have gained from higher grain prices. 'We are all very concerned about the distress that the sharp rise in food prices has caused to the common man,' Singh said.

'I believe that the worst is over as far as food inflation is concerned. The prime minister said India had adequate

stocks of rice and wheat to maintain food security. Singh was quoted by a spokesman of the Congress Party as saying the country would try to control rising prices by increasing production. The government has also taken a series of measures to control sugar prices.

Warning against complacency over food security

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that India had been lulled into a "false sense of security" over its food reserves, and warned that income and population growth were pressuring supplies.

At a meeting of top bureaucrats from India's 28 states, Singh urged a renewed emphasis on the agriculture sector to bolster production to meet growing demand from India's billion plus population. "For some time past, there was, if I may say so, a false sense of security that availability of food has ceased to be a concern," said Singh, whose government is under pressure over spiraling food prices.

"But we have learnt that our growing population and higher levels of living necessitate augmentation of our food supplies," he said, calling on state governments to forge "appropriate strategies" to bolster food production and tackle shortages. A weak monsoon pushed up food prices by 19 percent in 2009, putting household budgets under strain. It also hit sugar output before flooding in key growing areas did further damage. As a result, sugar prices have almost doubled in India-the world's biggest consumer of the commodity-since January last year.

Cheap loans, high commodity prices fire up Indian farmers

Until a year ago, Subash Motke was against borrowing money for farming, but this year the 65-year-old sugarcane farmer in Maharashtra has cheerfully taken a loan of 50,000 rupees.

Rising food prices and government incentives to increase farm loans such as lower interest rates and waiver of some loans, have encouraged farmers such as Motke to consider increasing investments in the farm using borrowed funds. 'This year sugarcane price is high. It is an opportunity for me to earn more by increasing production. But I need to invest more as seed and cultivation costs have gone up,' he explains.

Financial institutions have disbursed loans of 1.65 trillion rupees in April-October 2009, up 43.5 per cent compared to the same period a year ago, said SK Mitra, executive director at National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. Prices of agri-commodities soared in 2009 as the weakest monsoon in nearly four decades

cut summer-crop's output and higher global prices also influenced rates as the government struggled to bridge the demand-supply gap in the country.

To encourage domestic production, bank farm loan targets were raised 16 per cent to 3.25 trillion rupees in 2009/10, while the rates on such loans dropped to 6-7 per cent across states from 12-16 per cent four years ago. 'The government has determined to boost the farming sector by giving farmers subsidies, making them available to more funds so that productivity would increase, overall output will increase,' Harish Galipelli, head of research at JRG Wealth Management said.

The government in 2008/09 budget announced 710 billion rupees debt waiver scheme and it was extended by six months till December 2009 in the current year's budget. 'Debt waiver has made more farmers eligible for borrowing. This is one of the main reasons for higher borrowing by farmers,' said Niranjan Parsha, general manager, agriculture business at State Bank of India, the country's biggest lender. In earlier years, the government raised the minimum support price of key crops like wheat, paddy, lentils and cotton to prompt farmers to boost yields, says Mitra of NABARD.

Industry observers, like Galipelli say, the change in the government policy led to higher farm loans, but it didn't translate into agriculture output because of the poor monsoon.

Food inflation nears 18 per cent

India's food inflation climbed again to hit nearly 18 percent, official figures showed days after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared the worst of the problem was over. New figures released by the commerce ministry showed annual food inflation jumped to 17.94 percent for the final week of January, up from 17.56 percent.

Wrestling down food inflation, running at decade highs, is a key priority for the Congress-led government, whose main electoral backing comes from India's teeming poor-those most vulnerable to rising food prices.

"Until winter crop supplies come into the market, especially for cereals and pulses, we will have inflationary pressures, but by March we should see some (food price) pressures ease," Shubhada Rao, chief economist at India's Yes Bank, told AFP. High food inflation, driven by soaring prices for pulses, vegetables and sugar, has given a political boost to opposition parties, which have accused the government of incompetence.

Tax-free white sugar imports

The Indian government has formally extended duty-free white sugar imports by nine months as the country looks to cover a supply shortfall. The deadline expires on December 31, 2010, the official website www.cbec.gov.in of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, an arm of the trade ministry showed.

Farm Minister Sharad Pawar on Jan. 13 said his government had extended duty-free imports of white sugar by nine months to Dec. 31. Duty-free imports of raw sugar shipments are already allowed until Dec. 31. Sugar output in India, which has emerged as a large importer of the sweetener, fell 44 percent year-on-year to 14.7 million tonnes in 2008/09.

Large imports by India, the world's leading sugar consumer, helped New York-traded raw sugar hit a peak of 30.40 cents per lb this month, while benchmark white sugar London prices scaled a new peak of \$767 per tonne last month.

India may beat Chinese economic growth: Montek

Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia has expressed confidence that in the years to come India could emerge as the fastest growing economy in the world, beating China as the nation has yet to achieve its full growth potential.

"We have accelerated ... not reached the full peak of our growth potential which could easily be 9 to 10 per cent. So, if India accelerates to say 10 per cent and China begins to decelerates you could have a situation where India grows faster than China," he said at the conclusion of the five-day World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.

India has been growing by over nine per cent till the global economic crisis hit the economy and pulled down the country's growth rate to 6.7 per cent during 2008-09. During the current fiscal, the economy is expected to expand by over 7.75 per cent, as indicated by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in his Mid-Year Review of the Economy which was tabled in Parliament in December.

China clocked a growth of 10.7 per cent during the quarter ending December retaining its position as the fastest growing economy during 2009. India grew by 7.9 per cent during July-September 2009 quarter.

Ahluwalia, who participated in several sessions during the 40th annual meeting of WEF at Swiss Alpine resort, also emphasised that the impression about India has changed among the global investor community.

Nepal to amend foreign employment rules

Nepal is all set to amend the Foreign Employment Regulation 2008, local media The Kathmandu Post reported.

Under the new regulation, foreign employment agencies will be able to set up branches and appoint agents by depositing 200,000 Nepali rupees (some 2,700 U.S. dollars), the report said. According to the existing regulation, the agencies are required to deposit the sum only to appoint an agent.

"There are thousands of agents working for agencies and they are reaching every village working illegally," said Purna Chandra Bhattarai, joint secretary at the Ministry of Labor and Transport Management. "This new provision is being introduced to legalize the mismanagement of agents, which has also increased cases of fraud."

The regulation, which is expected to come into effect within two months, is also bringing a provision to take strong action against agencies who fail to send workers for overseas jobs on time. And such agencies will also be liable to refund the collected money with interest.

Afghan geological reserves worth \$1 trillion: Karzai

Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest countries, is sitting on mineral and petroleum reserves worth an estimated \$1 trillion, President Hamid Karzai said.

The war-ravaged nation could become one of the richest in the world if helped to tap its geological deposits, Karzai told reporters. 'I have very good news for Afghans,' Karzai said. 'The initial figures we have obtained show that our mineral deposits are worth a thousand billion dollars not a thousand million dollars but a thousand billion,' he said.

He based his assertion, he said, on a survey being carried out by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), due to be completed in 'a couple of months'.

The USGS, the US government's scientific agency, has been working on the \$17 million survey for a number of years, Karzai said. While Afghanistan is not renowned as a resource-rich country, it has a wide range of deposits, including copper, iron ore, gold and chromite, as well as natural gas, oil and precious and semi-precious stones.

Little has been exploited because the country has been mired in conflict for 30 years, and is embroiled in a vicious insurgency by Islamist rebels led by the Taliban.

More than 100,000 foreign troops under US and NATO command are battling the insurgents, with another

40,000 due for deployment this year. China and India have bid for contracts to develop mines, with the Chinese winning a copper contract. An iron ore contract is due to be awarded later this year.

First discovered in 1974, the site, 30 kilometres (20 miles) south of Kabul in Logar, is estimated to contain 11.3 million tonnes of copper. The Hajigak iron ore mine in Bamiyan province, north of Kabul, is currently under tender, with one Chinese and half a dozen Indian firms bidding. The contract is for exploitation of almost two billion tonnes of high-grade ore, involving processing, smelting, steel production and electricity production.

Bhutan sends oranges to Bangladesh via new Indian route

Bhutan has begun using a newly agreed trade route through India's north-eastern region to export its products to Bangladesh, significantly reducing distance, travel time and transportation cost. Three trucks with a consignment of approximately 8300 kilograms of Bhutanese oranges entered Sylhet after crossing the Indo-Bangla border at Dawki in India's north-eastern state of Meghalaya.

This was the first consignment that Bhutan exported to Bangladesh after New Delhi, Dhaka and Thimpu last month agreed upon the new transit route through north-eastern India using Dawki-Tamabil Land Custom Stations. Bhutanese exporters have so far been using the much longer route through Siliguri in India's West Bengal state for transporting goods to Bangladesh.

Lungpa Tantin, the general secretary of Bhutan Exporters Association, said the new route had considerably lessened the distance that the consignments had to travel from the Himalayan kingdom to Bangladesh.

Tantin said that the trucks had earlier had to travel around 430 km from eastern Bhutan via West Bengal to reach Bangladesh. The new route has brought down the distance to just 280 kms, good news for exporters of perishable items. The transportation cost had come down accordingly, he added. Bhutan produces an average 100,000 tonnes of oranges annually. Bangladesh has been a major market for the orange growers of Bhutan.

Tantin said that the demand for Bhutanese oranges was rising in Bangladesh. The new trade route through north-eastern India would help the orange growers to access the market in Bangladesh faster, he added. He said that Bhutanese exporters were keen to use the new trade route to transport ginger and other agro-products to Bangladesh too. Dawki is a small town on the India-Bangladesh border.

Chinese economy projected to grow 10pc in 2010

A top state-run think-tank has forecast that China will return to double digit growth this year, with a 10 percent rise in gross domestic product, state media reported. The Centre for Forecasting Science at the Chinese Academy of Sciences said GDP could grow by 11 percent in the first quarter of the year, before slightly slowing down for the rest of 2010, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Investment was expected to increase as a result of the government's economic stimulus package, but overall growth in investment for the year would fall to 25 percent, Xinhua quoted a report by the state-run institution as saying.

China's GDP, which analysts say could overtake that of Japan, expanded by 8.7 percent in 2009. It returned to double-digit growth in the fourth quarter last year, with a 10.7 percent growth, the fastest in two years.

A government stimulus package worth four trillion yuan (586 billion dollars) has widely been credited with sustaining growth in a year when much of the global economy was in crisis.

Malaysian outsourcing industry to see higher revenue

Malaysia's outsourcing industry is expected to see a year-on-year increase of 20-25 per cent for revenue in 2010, said David Wong Nan Fay, chairman of Outsourcing Malaysia.

He made the remark in a media briefing after releasing the report 'Strategic planning and tactical road maps for Malaysian organisations to become leading global outsourcing providers'. The revenues would be mainly contributed by the revenues would be from retail, healthcare, financial and insurance, oil and gas, supply chain services and engineering sectors, he said.

The information technology processing and the business process outsourcing industries would also make contribution, he added. Wong said most of the services providers, who relied heavily on government incentives, had yet to achieve international competitiveness.

Jointly compiled by the Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry of Malaysia, Outsourcing Malaysia and IDC Malaysia, the report pointed out that Malaysia's outsourcing industry still lagged behind among several other industries. The industry raked in \$1.1 billion in revenue last year.

Strategies to sustain exports

Malaysia unrolled strategies in Kuala Lumpur to sustain its export growth in 2010, expecting the increase margin for this year could reach 3.5 per cent.

Malaysia will improve access for its exports through strengthening its existing free trade agreements concluded, including improving the utilisation of them, Malaysian international trade and industry minister Mustapa Mohamed said when he unveiling the country's trade performance in 2009. Malaysia also will speed up the negotiation and signing of new FATs with India, Chile and Australia, he said. Mustapa said that his country also would target fast growing markets, like China and countries in West Asia, as well as new and emerging markets like Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and Libya in Africa, and Mexico, Panama, Brazil in South America.

Meanwhile, Mustapa said Malaysia will diversify into new niches in traditional markets, including environment products and services, manufacturing related services, power generation machinery, and engineering supporting industry. He foresees Malaysia's exports will continue the path of recovery this year.

The report on Malaysia's trade performance in 2009 unveiled that the country's exports in 2009 declined by 16.6 per cent to 553.3 billion ringgit (\$158b), mainly due to the decline of prices for palm oil, rubber and crude petroleum.

Myanmar privatisation move gets momentum

Myanmar's privatisation move has been getting momentum with the Privatisation Commission announcing auctioning of 110 more state enterprises this year under its privatisation plan laid down 15 years ago.

The sale includes factories, warehouses and cinemas owned by 11 ministries and government departments. These state enterprises to be sold out are scattered mainly in Yangon, Mandalay, Ayeyawaddy and Bago divisions and Rakhine state.

In a bid to turn the state-owned enterprises into more effective ones under its market-oriented economic policy, Myanmar introduced the privatisation plan in 1995 which has been implemented through auctioning and leasing or establishing joint ventures with local and foreign investors. The privatisation plan also covers those enterprises nationalised in the 1960s.

The Myanmar authorities declared early this month privatisation of some port terminals' handling business,

offering at least three port terminals in Yangon for private enterprises to tender. In addition, the Myanmar government planned to privatise all the state-run gas stations in the country by March 31. Meanwhile, the Fuel Importers and Distributors Association has been formed to take over fuel trade formerly run by the state.

The move will pave way for free trade of petrol and diesel, putting an end to a system of buying fuel with ration book under restricted quota. Moreover, the Myanmar government has awarded contracts to seven private companies to upgrade a highway connecting the two biggest cities of Yangon and Mandalay. The 707-kilometer highway will be built under a build, operate and transfer system by the seven companies.

Port terminals handling business to be privatized

The Myanmar authorities will privatize some port terminals' handling business, designating at least three port terminals in Yangon to be handed over to tender winning private enterprises for continued and effective operation, the local weekly Voice reported.

The three Yangon port terminals, operated by the government's Transport Ministry before and now covered by the privatization plan, include Botataung's, Sule's and Bo Aung Kyaw's as well as some other port areas, the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry said.

According to the government's Privatization Commission, since 2000, two port terminals in Yangon-Asia World's in Ahlone township and Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa (MITT) in Kyauktan township have been put into private run. The privatization of port terminals in Myanmar would contribute to the development of sea-borne trade and boost the country's foreign trade, merchants said.

Asia is now world's biggest air travel market: IATA

The Asia-Pacific region has overtaken North America as the world's largest air travel market with 647 million passengers in 2009, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said. By contrast, 638 million people flew on commercial flights in North America last year, IATA announced at an aviation business conference on the eve of the Singapore Airshow featuring the world's leading aviation industry players.

Within Asia, China has eclipsed Japan over the past decade as the region's largest domestic market, with 1,400 aircraft compared with Japan's 540 and 5.7 million weekly seats against 2.6 million in Japan. The Singapore Airshow is taking place after a harrowing year

in the global aviation industry, which lost an estimated 11 billion dollars in 2009 as a result of the financial meltdown that began in the United States.

IATA director general Giovanni Bisignani told the conference that the Asia-Pacific market would continue to grow rapidly with an estimated 217 million additional air passengers a year in the region by 2013. "While we see dynamism and diversity within the region, the aspect of Asia-Pacific that excites me most is its potential," said Bisignani.

Thai inflation hits 16-month high

Thailand's inflation rate hit a 16-month high in January as it rose for the fourth straight month, the commerce ministry said recently. Consumer prices increased 4.1 percent year-on-year in the first month of 2010, after rising 3.5 percent in December, the ministry's permanent secretary Yanyong Phuangrath said.

He said the January figure, the highest since an inflation rate of 6.0 percent in September 2008 was a sign of economic improvement, which would be further stimulated by the low interest rate.

"However the domestic political situation is a factor which may affect the economy," he said, as Thailand braces for fresh street protests by anti-government demonstrators in coming weeks.

Vietnam raises \$1 billion in global bond issue

Vietnam said it has raised \$1 billion after tapping the global bonds market for only the second time as the government tries to plug a massive budget deficit and temper inflation. 'The issuance was successful,' the Ministry of Finance said in a statement.

Some of the money will go towards the national budget and the rest will go to state projects including the Dung Quat oil refinery, the state Vietnam News reported.

The 10-year bonds were issued with a coupon of 6.75 per cent and entered the market with a yield of 6.95 per cent, said Deputy Minister of Finance Tran Xuan Ha, who led an international roadshow to promote the bonds.

The country's first international bond issue in 2005 raised \$750 million, Vietnam News said. Those 10-year bonds had a coupon of 7.125 per cent. Vietnam's economy grew 5.32 per cent last year but that expansion came at a price, with a budget deficit that official data said reached seven per cent of gross domestic product. 'The good news is Vietnam has been able to tap the international capital markets,' John Hendra, the United Nations resident coordinator in Vietnam, told reporters.

But he said the budget and current account deficits are both 'fairly high' and authorities face a challenge to prevent a recurrence of the overheating that pushed inflation to an annual 23 per cent in 2008. Other observers have also expressed concern about a return to high inflation.

Consumer prices rose 6.88 per cent in 2009, while they were up 7.62 per cent year on year in January, official figures showed. Reducing the trade deficit, which reached \$12.2 billion last year, will be a high government priority this year, Phan Chi Thanh, a senior official in the Office of the Government said.

After burning through its official dollar reserves, Vietnam in November devalued the dong in a bid to bolster trade, which was hit by the global financial crisis. More than half of the government's bond issue went to American investors, almost one third to Asia and the rest to Europe, the Ministry of Finance said.

Singapore seeks to cap low-skilled job-seekers

Singapore will be less welcoming to low-skilled job seekers from abroad as it seeks to cap the proportion of foreigners in the workforce at current levels of about one-third amid growing unhappiness among its citizens.

Singapore depends on foreigners to staff its factories and construction sites but the numbers have risen sharply in recent years. About one-in-three of Singapore's 3 million workforce is now foreign compared with about 10 percent back in 1990. We cannot increase the number of foreign workers as liberally as we did over the last decade, or else we will run up against real physical and social limits," an economic strategies committee led by Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said in a report.

We want to maintain the current balance as it is, Manpower Minister Gan Kim Yong, another member of the committee, told a media briefing. The committee recommended gradually raising the levies firms must pay to hire foreigners to restrict demand and raising productivity among locals and foreign workers already in Singapore. The measures will affect foreigners earning less than S\$2,500 (\$1,775) a month.

The proposals underline Singapore's efforts to reinvent itself in the face of competition from China and India. In recent years, the government has promoted new industries such as pharmaceuticals, private banking and casinos by lowering taxes and providing other incentives.

Tharman said the measures proposed were "nuanced" in that foreign workers were critical to Singapore and the

city-state needed to attract highly skilled people from overseas to attain its goal of becoming a global business hub. Singapore set up the economic strategies committee in May 2009 at the height of the city-state's worst-ever recession. The key recommendations have been accepted by the government and will be discussed during the Feb 22 budget debate.

Other recommendations include shifting the country's port further west to create land for a new development next to the existing central business district. The large influx of foreigners in recent years has become a sore point among local Singaporeans who fear the newcomers compete for jobs and push down wages.

The government has announced steps to reduce housing, health, childcare and educational benefits enjoyed by foreigners who hold "permanent residency" status ahead of a general election that will likely be held this year. The People's Action Party has been in power since 1959. As elections are looming, the government needs to address the public grievance and comes up with populist policies to please the voters," said an Asian diplomat who declined to be named. "Foreigners are an easy target to pick.

Song Seng Wun, an economist with Malaysia's CIMB, said demand for construction workers would fall as major projects like the country's two multi-billion-dollar casino resorts are near completion. But other sectors still need foreign labor. "I am not sure how Singapore can get by with less foreign workers unless of course they are turned into permanent or local residents," Song said.

Casinos to boost tourism

Singapore opened the first of two casinos as part of a campaign to attract millions of new tourists, but the rich city-state is not touting itself as a rival to glitzy Macau or Las Vegas. Resorts World Sentosa, owned by Malaysian gaming giant Genting, will also feature Southeast Asia's first Universal Studios movie theme park. The second casino complex, Marina Bay Sands, is currently being completed by US-based Las Vegas Sands and is expected to open in April.

Officials hope the casinos will help Singapore achieve its target of 17 million visitors a year generating over \$21 billion by 2015, boosting the services sector and reducing the role of manufacturing in the economy. Visitor arrivals fell to 9.7 million visitors in 2009, down 4.3 per cent from 2008, but a surge in the final quarter of last year boosted the tourism industry's hopes that 2010 numbers will be better.

The arrival numbers include tourists using the island city-state as a jumpoff point to other Asian destinations.

Singapore hopes tourists will stay a little longer and spend a lot more as a result of the casino resorts. Resorts World Sentosa is aimed at families, while Marina Bay Sands, located next to the banking district, is designed to cater to the corporate and convention crowd. 'Singapore's new casinos open up Southeast Asia as an entirely new market for multiple-billion dollar integrated entertainment,' Jonathan Galaviz, an independent gaming industry analyst based in Las Vegas, told newsmen.

A marine life park, a maritime museum, a spa and two more hotels will be launched at Resorts World Sentosa after 2010. Singapore gave the green light for casino gambling in 2005, setting off a flurry of construction that went ahead despite the city-state slipping into recession in 2008 due to the impact of the global crisis.

Toyota faces Corolla probe

US regulators launched a preliminary probe into reported steering problems with the Corolla, Toyota's second-most popular vehicle in the important U.S. market behind the Camry sedan.

Preliminary investigations are a common step by regulators and are often closed without leading to a recall. Toyota said it was looking into complaints about the steering systems of the 2009 and 2010 Corolla models, of which some 550,000 have been sold in North America, but that it would only recall the car if the issue were deemed a safety risk. But analysts and investors are worried about the damage renewed scrutiny on the Corolla, which is already subject to a recall for an accelerator pedal defect announced less than a month ago, could do to Toyota's brand and sales.

"Another recall of the Corolla may cost only 5 billion yen to 6 billion yen (\$55 million to \$66 million). But the Corolla is synonymous with the Toyota name," said Koji Endo, an auto analyst at Advanced Research Japan. "Recalling the flagship model over and over again could damage Toyota's brand. I am afraid its customers might leave for rival cars."

Toyota's quality chief, Shinichi Sasaki, said at a briefing in Tokyo that internal studies have shown that drivers have complained about a change in steering response versus older Corollas, possibly due to a switch from a hydraulic power steering system to an electronic one.

He also said that it was not yet clear if the problem is due to the steering, tires or another part. Toyota recalled 2.3 million vehicles, including the 2009 and 2010 Corolla models, in the U.S. to fix faulty accelerator pedals in late January. It has repaired about 500,000 cars so far, a Tokyo-based Toyota spokesman said.

So far the problem appears contained to the United States. Japan's transport ministry said there have been no complaints reported about the Corolla's steering system in Japan, adding that the model sold in Japan used different parts.

Shares of Toyota closed down 0.6 percent at 3,360 yen, underperforming the Nikkei average's 0.3 percent rise.

China cuts back on US T-bond holding

China has slashed its holding of US Treasury bonds after expressing concern over the swelling US deficit and amid rising US-China tensions, according to government data released.

The drop in China's bond holdings by \$34.2 billion or 4.3 per cent to \$755.4 billion in December also fuelled the biggest drop in foreign purchase of short-term US bonds, said the Treasury's latest international capital data report and based on comparative figures. China's US bond holding decline was also its biggest drop since August 2000 and allowed Japan to regain its position as top holder of American government debt after a 15-month hiatus.

Japan's holding increased to \$768.8 billion in December from \$757.3 billion the previous month, Treasury data s eteriorating US-China relations in recent months with problems seen on multiple fronts, and after Beijing expressed concern about US economic woes.

Some analysts said China might be cutting purchases of US Treasuries to flex its financial leverage on US president Barack Obama's administration. 'The last few months of net sales of US Treasuries by China might also contain a subtle economic and political message to the US,' Eswar Prasad, a trade policy professor at Cornell University and former head of the International Monetary Fund's China division, told reporters.

'Chinese leaders are deploying their reserves to try and pressure the US to stop haranguing China about its currency and trade policies and to back off from interference in its domestic political and human rights issues,' he said.

In the latest US-China dispute, president Barack Obama's administration rebuffed Beijing's demand to cancel his meeting with the Dalai Lama. The deepening public spat over Tibet, a row over US arms sales to Taiwan, China's dispute with Google and trade and currency disagreements, come at a key diplomatic moment, as Obama seeks Chinese help to toughen sanctions on Iran.

Saudi Arabia launches solar energy programme

Aiming to stabilise future power and water supplies in the country, Saudi Arabia has begun work on the first solar-powered water desalination plant, the first step in a three-part programme to introduce solar energy into the Kingdom. The programme, launched by the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, aims to help stabilise future power and water supplies inside Saudi Arabia through the creation of solar-powered desalination facilities, an official statement said.

Water desalination is critical to providing clean drinking water around the world. Saudi Arabia produces 18 per cent of the world's desalinated water. By building water desalination plants that run on solar energy, the Kingdom can reduce operational costs and in turn, reduce consumer costs.

Prince Dr Turki bin Saud bin Mohammad, KACST vice-president for Research Institutes said, 'The solar energy programme will reduce the cost of producing desalinated water and of generating power for use in the Kingdom, an oil-dependent nation, which has launched a national energy efficiency programme.'

Saudi Arabia is a prime location to harness solar energy because of its year-round sunshine. The sun in Saudi Arabia emits about 7,000 watts of energy per square metre over an average of 12 hours every day, the statement added. KACST and IBM have developed a research centre to determine how best to harness and repurpose this solar energy and is preparing to implement this state-of-the-art technology.

Saudi companies not to see better times soon: Survey

Improving economic conditions could take some time before they reflect on Saudi firms' bottom line, according to a survey by Banque Saudi Fransi. Almost half of 824 surveyed firms expect inflation to rise in the coming two quarters and only a third consider boosting their inventories during this period, the survey's results showed.

Optimism is surely on an upward curve, (but) managers think it could take some time before the better economic climate filters down to their bottom line," the bank said. Businesses are still waiting for hard evidence before they start adjusting their plans to their assumptions of a likely pick-up in consumer demand in 2010, it added. "Companies are, in general, certain that the worst of last year's slowdown has passed; what they are divided on is when business activity and demand will pick up substantially".

The growth in the private sector which accounts for about 46 percent of the kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP) hit a 14-year low of 2.5 percent in 2009. The global economic slowdown coupled with a drop in oil revenues the domestic economy's backbone slowed the Saudi economy to the verge of contraction in 2009, likely eking out growth of 0.15 percent compared to 4.3 percent in 2008.

Problems were further aggravated by multi-billion dollar debt defaults last year by some family-owned firms, which made banks more meticulous on lending and hurt profits after rapid lending growth over the previous six years.

As a result, unemployment among the native Saudi population more than doubled to 15.2 percent in 2009 from 6.2 percent a year earlier, Fransi said in a previous report. "A pick up in the pace of bank credit is a precondition to an economic revival, particularly for the private sector," Fransi said in Sunday's survey.

Caution appears to still prevail: almost 59 percent of respondents said lending fell below their expectations, down from 61.8 percent in a previous survey during the fourth quarter of 2009.

The survey also showed that just a third of surveyed firms plan to raise their prices in the next two quarters down from 35.9 percent in the fourth quarter's survey while those planning to lower prices rose to 9 percent from 8.2 percent.

Saudi imports fell by more than a fifth in 2009 as firms adjusted to a slowdown in domestic demand. "The survey showed businesses have not shifted their perspective much since in the fourth quarter (2009)," Fransi said. Most respondents continue to consider a hiring freeze over the coming two quarters, albeit at a lower proportion: 47.8 percent of them said they would maintain the freeze, down from 53.3 percent in the fourth quarter, Fransi added.

SMEs expected to drive growth in UAE realty

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) could drive demand for both office space and affordable residential property in the UAE if they can secure bank loans to finance start-ups, provide working capital and investment for expansion and growth, according to an industry expert.

"It is widely accepted that SMEs account for approximately 80 per cent of the UAE's economic activity, which means that collectively they employ a large number of staff, require industrial, commercial and office space and naturally employees need housing.

However, they are restricted by a lack of liquidity," said Mohammed Nimer, CEO of MAG Group Property Development.

According to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce these companies are having trouble securing credit from UAE banks. If they do, the terms are short, usually three to six months and the interest rates for unsecured loans are averaging around 15 per cent due to their perceived high-risk category.

According to Ruwad Establishment, there are over 260,000 trading and industrial companies in the UAE of which over 200,000, are classified as SMEs. The UAE classifies companies according to the number of employees and the level of investment and in general an SME has less than 100 employees with an investment range between Dh200,000 and Dh2 million.

"Imagine the stimulus to the housing market alone if each SME averaged just one new employee per annum, not to mention the benefits to the wider economy airlines, hotels, restaurants, shopping and so on," added Nimer.

A Dun & Bradstreet report estimated earlier this year that loan rejection rates were in the range of 50 to 70 per cent due in part to the bank's difficulty in gaining access to accurate financial statements and in rare cases the complex and time consuming process of recovering money or liquidating seized assets. Other statistics of the survey provide equally grim reading. Of those polled, just 25 per cent of small businesses used a secured loan and only 13 per cent had used an unsecured loan, while 45 per cent used an overdraft and 55 per cent a letter of credit facility.

Nimer acknowledged government efforts such as the lowering of minimum investment levels to form a company. He also praised the support provided by institutions like the Mohammed Bin Rashid establishment for Young Business Leaders and the Khalifa Fund.

"However more needs to be done to unlock the potential of the SME sector, banks must relax their lending criteria, SMEs are the backbone of many developed economies and they hold the key to real economic growth in the UAE," added Nimer. "It is interesting to note that SMEs are responsible for 30 per cent and 28 per cent of the US and Japan's exports respectively. China's two million SMEs have greatly increased their exports and Toyota depends on SMEs to produce 80 per cent of its car parts," said Nimer. Nimer applauded the recent initiatives to improve transparency and regulations and agreed that liquidity was not the only hurdle the real estate industry needed to clear.

"The Dubai real estate market in particular has witnessed the more unsavoury side of property development. Financial irregularities, land ownership disputes, cancelled and delayed projects and poor quality finishes," he said.

Nimer agreed confidence needed to be restored, but added that liquidity was at the root of the problem and would continue to play a critical role. "Owners and staff of new small businesses with aspirations as owner-occupiers will still need mortgages," said Nimer.

Having been in business now for 30 years, the MAG Group has an enviable track record of stability. Improving economic conditions could take some time before they reflect on Saudi firms' bottom line, according to a survey by Banque Saudi Fransi. Almost half of 824 surveyed firms expect inflation to rise in the coming two quarters and only a third consider boosting their inventories during this period, the survey's results showed.

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UAE third-largest market for Rolls Royce luxury cars

The UAE's car market has dipped by 45 per cent during the first two months of 2009, as compared to the corresponding period in the previous year. However, it's a different story altogether for luxury automakers catering to the rich, wealthy, and affluent this side of the world. Rolls Royce reports a growth of 20 per cent across its global operations in 2008 and has announced a brilliant performance for the first two months of this year. With the region comprising 20 per cent of the British carmaker's global sales in 2008, and the UAE finishing the year's race as the third largest market for the company, Peter Schoppmann, Regional Director for the Middle East, has expressed his confidence in making stable developments in 2009.



In an exclusive interview with Emarat Business Review, Schoppmann paints a clear picture of the luxury auto industry's true status, and reiterates the company's dedication to exclusivity and refinement amidst speculations of short-term sales strategies to weather the economic storm.

Expatriate labour forms 70% of Kuwait population

A ministry of Social Affairs and Labor official noted that foreign labour constitutes 70 percent of Kuwait's population, stating that the ministry ensures their rights though minor aberrations do exist which could be rectified. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor intends to cooperate with other ministries to address the problem of the large number of foreign labor in Kuwait, Undersecretary Mohammad Al-Kanderi said.

The new labor law obliges the country to form a supreme authority for house-employed labor through which solutions to many problems could be reached, he explained. Kuwait has signed seven out of eight international agreements on labor rights so far, and it is on the verge of signing the last one. The official said that the ministry hosted an International Labor Organization (ILO) workshop to respond to queries related to foreign labor in the country which provided an opportunity for a clearer perspective on these comments, he concluded.

UAE's inflation hits 9-year low

United Arab Emirates Inflation hit a nine-year low of 1.5 percent in 2009, in line with forecasts, as prices returned to a downward path in December due to a fall in the household category, preliminary data showed. The global financial crisis ended an oil- and real estate-fuelled boom in the Gulf Arab region, depressing consumer prices from record peaks set in 2008, with some countries such as the UAE experiencing temporary deflation in 2009. The Gulf country's consumer prices fell 0.4 per cent on an annual basis in December, after an increase of 0.17 percent in November, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

On the month, prices in the world's third-largest oil exporter decreased 0.7 percent in the last month of 2009, after rising 0.4 percent in November, the data showed. The bureau said the decline in the key household category, which accounts for 39 percent of the inflation basket and includes rents and energy costs, was behind the December fall, while food prices edged up slightly. It did not give details. The second-largest Arab economy, which saw four months of consecutive price declines before November's rise, registered record annual inflation of 12.3 percent in 2008.

Analysts polled by Reuters expected an average inflation of 1.5 percent for the full year of 2009. Inflation is forecast to accelerate to 2.5 percent this year as the economy recovers from the last year's downturn. "What we are expecting in 2010 is a low single-digit inflation but probably higher than in 2009," said Giyas Gokkent, head of research at National Bank of Abu Dhabi.

Developing world suffering in financial slump: UNDP

The global downturn has had a serious impact on poor nations and risks reversing improvements made in some countries, the head of the United Nations Development Programme Helen Clark said. Clark, who was New Zealand's prime minister from 1999 to 2008, said the world was already struggling to reduce poverty and hunger and raise living conditions for those in the developing world. "The economic crisis does not make it easier," she said in a speech to Sydney's Lowy Institute, a foreign policy think-tank. "It does raise the prospect of going backwards on some of the progress that had been made." Clark said prior to the global recession the number of chronically hungry people was estimated at 800 million people but had since risen to about one billion.

In the Pacific alone, thousands had fallen back into poverty since the financial downturn rattled world markets in the later half of 2008. "Last year we estimated that five Pacific island countries saw an outright contraction in the economy because the recession had eroded the limited income that they had from exports, eroded their tourism and eroded their remittances," Clark said.

"We estimate that across the Pacific Islands, countless thousands of people and families have fallen back into poverty." Clark said as the world dealt with massive humanitarian crises, such as the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, it needed to "build back better" so the developing world could better withstand future shocks. "In the past two years alone the world has experienced major food and fuel crises, a global recession and climatic and other natural disasters," she said.

"Thinking also needs to be given now on the focus of building back better so the world has greater resilience to withstand shocks in the future. Shocks in many forms will keep coming, whether natural disasters or human-induced disasters."

Greece must resolve crisis itself: ECB chief economist

Greece must take further austerity measures and resolve its financial crisis by itself, the European Central Bank's chief economist said in an interview. The Greek government must "put its own house in order," Juergen Stark told the magazine *Der Spiegel* in comments, a day after European Union leaders expressed support for Greece at an emergency summit in Brussels.

Austerity measures unveiled by Athens until now "are a strict minimum, which must now be put into practice, and more will be needed given the clear deterioration of the situation," Stark added.

EU heads of state and government pledged to prevent heavily indebted Greece from default and to defend the 16-nation eurozone from possible fall-out from the crisis but announced no concrete measures.

Stark rejected the idea of bilateral aid from countries like Germany for Greece, deeming it "counter productive or very difficult to reconcile with the principles of monetary union." He also slammed a proposal for a pan-eurozone bond issue to help Athens roll over debt when it comes due this year, saying it would do nothing to resolve the country's structural problems.

Greek debt currently amounts to around 113 percent of its total annual output, and its public deficit is about 12.7 percent of gross domestic product, nearly four times the normally accepted eurozone limit. Earlier, ECB president Jean-Claude Trichet raised the question of coordinated loans to Greece, while diplomatic sources said other possible measures were guarantees for Greek bonds or the purchase of Greek debt. Trichet in a statement also welcomed an EU decision "to take determined and coordinated action, if needed, to safeguard financial stability in the euro area."

Austerity plan

Greece will stick to its deficit-cutting plan and the first three months of the year will be crucial for regaining investors and EU confidence, the country's finance minister said in an interview. 'As far as the budget is concerned, every day is a crucial test for us. The monthly figures we release are scrutinized by the markets and the (EU) Commission, but the first quarter will be certainly crucial,' finance minister George Papaconstantinou said in an interview published on Greek newspaper *Ethnos*. 'The measures we have already announced will be implemented unswervingly and will pay off,' he added.

In its fiscal plan endorsed by the European Union last week, Greece aims to reduce its ballooning deficit to below 3 per cent of GDP by 2012 from 12.7 per cent in 2009, the euro zone's highest.

The government has said it will cut waste in the public sector and reform taxation to achieve the target, but the EU has said it wanted further details by March 16 on the steps planned and world markets still doubted their effectiveness.

World stock markets slumped to three-month lows partly on fear the Greece fiscal crisis would spread to others in the EU periphery, while and the euro fell to a 8-1/2 month low against the dollar. How the government will tackle its fiscal woes is expected to be seen this week when it plans to unveil new tax and wage policy

bills. Papaconstantinou said both bills will be fair. 'Under these circumstances, all of us need to contribute in a fair way, according to our capabilities, while the weakest will be protected,' he said.

Europe seeks rebound with new economic strategy

The European Union, shaken by Greece's fiscal crisis and struggling to get its new institutions into gear, hopes to relaunch itself this week as leaders mull improved, coordinated economic governance. Europe's post-recession economic woes, highlighted by the swelling deficits of Greece and others, were the focus of an European Union summit.

The meeting in Brussels was also notable for being convened by the EU's first permanent president, Herman Van Rompuy, who has kept a markedly low profile since assuming his unelected role in December. The global economic crisis which has hit Greece, Spain and Portugal particularly hard, even sparking fears that they could default on debts, adds to the urgency to restore growth and economic cohesion in the bloc, particularly in the 16-nation eurozone.

British Business Secretary Peter Mandelson attacked the European Union for failing to provide stronger international leadership on banking reform. 'European heads of government need to show more of a strategic lead to the EU as a whole,' the former EU trade commissioner deplored. Europe is seeking to do just that, by drawing up a new 'EU 2020' strategy for growth over the next ten years, with research, new technologies and green transport to the fore. The idea is to replace the European Union's much-vaunted 'Lisbon Strategy', launched in 2000 which is felt in many quarters to have lacked the teeth to make it work.

European policymakers try to calm markets

European policymakers scrambled to reassure markets on the stability of their 16-nation currency bloc as investors shed euro assets for a second day on fears about debt-laden member states like Greece and Portugal. European Central Bank Governing Council member Ewald Nowotny tried to play down a sharp fall in the euro, which hit its lowest level against the dollar since May 2009, and called talk of a euro zone breakup 'absurd.'

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou, on a visit to India, promised to 'credibly apply' an austerity programme designed to bring his country's yawning debt and deficit levels under control. Markets also

focused on Portugal, where parliament was due to vote on a regional financing bill that is seen as a crucial test of the government's ability to curb spending.

Alongside Greece and Spain, Portugal is one of a handful of euro bloc countries that face intense pressure to get their public finances in order and calm markets worried about the risks of a sovereign default. Analysts are no longer discounting the possibility that a smaller member of the bloc such as Greece could be pushed out, though most believe monetary union will survive. 'The market is closely watching each country's ability to pay its debts,' said Erkki Liikanen, who sits on the ECB council with Nowotny. 'If the faith is lost, rates will go up significantly.'

Reflecting the scope of the concerns, investors in the United States and Asia shed risky assets overnight and moved into US Treasuries and Japanese yen, both seen as safe havens. The euro tumbled below \$1.37 and slumped against other safe-haven currencies like the Swiss franc, forcing the Swiss National Bank to take the unusual step of intervening in the market. Greek stocks were down 4 per cent by early afternoon, while Portuguese and Spanish shares shed over 3 and 2 per cent, respectively, after tumbling 5 to 6 per cent.

The cost of insuring Greek, Portuguese and Spanish government debt against default shot up to record highs and the premiums investors demand to buy euro zone government bonds other than liquid German benchmarks rose broadly in a sign of growing unease about fiscal divergences in the bloc. 'There is now significant downside pressure on global indexes, with fear spreading that the situation in Greece could creep into other weaker European economies,' said Owen Ireland, an analyst at ODL Securities. 'Confidence is extremely brittle.'

Economic surveillance to be stepped up

The European Commission said it was preparing new measures to boost coordination among eurozone member countries and supervise their economic policies in light of the Greek debt crisis. "The critical lesson from this crisis is that we urgently need deeper and broader surveillance of economic policies, including earlier detection and tackling of imbalances, in order to better safeguard the macro-financial stability of the euro area," EU Monetary Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn said. "The commission will soon come forward with proposals to further strengthen the coordination and the surveillance of national economic policies within the euro area," he said in a statement.

The measures could form part of a broader package of proposals being drawn up by the EU's executive arm on

the 27-nation bloc's mid- and long-term economic strategy. Eurogroup chairman Jean-Claude Juncker is also working along similar lines. He wants to toughen surveillance over national economies and in particular to oblige countries to consult their partners before making important economic decisions.

Greece's failure to rein in its debt has sparked the European rethink. "I will not accept any more failure to respect the obligations that go with being a member of the Eurogroup," the Luxembourg premier told France's Liberation newspaper. "We will have to be more severe with each other" in the eurozone, he said.

G7 to continue stimulus until economy on track

Finance Ministers from leading industrialised nations vowed to continue epic deficit spending to bolster a fragile global recovery at the end of G7 talks in Canada's far north. Canadian Finance Minister Jim Flaherty told a closing press conference that he and his G7 counterparts 'need to continue to deliver the stimulus to which we are mutually committed, and look ahead to exit strategies.'

Measures to shore up the global economy have proved costly, and while the world's richest nations have promoted diverging economic and financial policies, the ministers agreed that investing in their economies remained vital in order to avoid backsliding.



'We have to make sure as not to undermine the global recovery,' said US treasury secretary Timothy Geithner. 'We're absolutely committed to maintaining support for our economies until the recovery is firmly established,' echoed Alistair Darling, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'We achieved a lot in 2009,' he said. 'The risk of 2010 is the world will forget just how serious the situation was and what more remains to be done.' Concern over soaring public debts, which cast doubt on the recovery

and caused market turmoil in recent days, was to top the agenda but ended up being pigeonholed at the talks, which presented no new directions for the Group of Seven industrialized nations. The state of the public coffers in Spain and Portugal has been causing growing unease, with investors fearing a scenario similar to the budget crisis gripping Greece.

Greece has been placed under unprecedented EU surveillance as it attempts to implement austerity measures to slash its massive debt and a 12.7-per cent public deficit, while Portugal's deficit hit 9.3 per cent last year, its highest since 1974.

European Central Bank chief Jean-Claude Trichet said the high deficit and debt in some countries was placing an 'additional burden' on monetary policy and undermining the bloc's stability and growth pact. The G7 nations' combined debt has reached a whopping \$30 trillion amid rabid spending to keep their economies afloat over the last year.

The euro tumbled to its lowest level in almost a year. Speaking for his European guests, Flaherty said: 'This is largely an issue to be managed not by the G7, but by the European Union which is how we left it.' Darling later commented that Greece must 'stick to its plan' to solve its debt woes and would be 'backed' by the eurozone. 'We understand collectively that it's in all our interests that countries return to good economic health as soon as they can,' he said.

Germany calls for efforts to counter protectionism

Sharing concerns of India and other developing countries, Germany opposed increasing protectionist measures taken by some countries in response to global financial crisis.

Addressing Indian businessmen in New Delhi, German president Horst Kohler said the world community has to enhance their efforts to counter protectionist tendencies. 'The world must continue to take decisive action to counter such (protectionist) tendencies,' Kohler said at the function organised by industry body CII and FICCI.

Without naming any nation, Kohler said that many countries are adopting protectionist approach to stem the global financial meltdown. The president's comments, incidentally, coincide with US president Barack Obama heightening the pitch to protect American jobs in the wake of employment losses due to outsourcing to developing countries like India.

China to impose anti-dumping penalties on US chicken

China said it would slap stiff penalties on a variety of US chicken meat it says is being sold at an unfairly low price, in the latest move sure to increase the pressure on strained Sino-US relations. The commerce ministry, in a preliminary ruling, said importers of US broiler chicken in China would have to pay deposits based on the difference - up to 105.4 per cent - between the meat's normal value and the alleged cut price.

'Broiler products imported from the United States were dumped (in China) and the domestic broiler sector has suffered material damages' as a result, the ministry said in a statement on its website.

China formally launched an anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigation into US chicken meat imports

in September after receiving complaints from domestic producers. That move came a day after the US slapped steep tariffs on imported Chinese tyres. Ties between the two nations are badly strained over a number of issues - from the value of the Chinese yuan and trade disputes to US arms sales to Taiwan and US President Barack Obama's plans to meet the Dalai Lama.

Obama again piqued China's ire by saying his administration had decided to get 'much tougher' about enforcement of existing trade rules. Beijing hit back, saying 'wrongful accusations and pressure' would not help resolve Sino-US disagreements. The United States and China are also at odds over Internet freedom, after Google threatened to pull out of the communist nation following what it says were cyber-attacks on the email accounts of Chinese human rights activists.

Mobile industry gears up for big show after tough times

The mobile phone industry has begun to emerge from the economic crisis as it heads into its biggest annual gathering next week with the sector's newest big gun, Google, making its presence felt. The four-day Mobile World Congress opens in Barcelona, Spain, on Monday with the usual guessing game about potential announcements on the latest innovations that promise to revolutionise the way people communicate.

Attendance is expected to be about the same as last year but lower than the 55,000 people who attended the event in February 2008, prior to the crisis, according to GSMA, the industry group that organises the congress. More than 47,000 people and 1,300 exhibitors are expected to attend the congress this year, it said. The World Mobile Congress comes as the industry begins to navigate away from a difficult period for the sector.

Global shipments of handsets had been falling every quarter since the third quarter of 2008, when the global financial crisis erupted, according to market research firm Strategy Analytics. But shipments surged by 10 per cent in the last three months of 2009, 'signalling an end to the

industry's year-long recession,' Strategy Analytics said in a January 29 report.

While handsets have grabbed the headlines in Barcelona in the past, analysts say this year's event might focus more on operating systems such as Google's Android and applications that can be downloaded into smartphones. 'I think it's probably going to be a slightly different show in terms of the focus, as far as historically it has been a lot about hardware,' said Carolina Milanese, an analyst at information technology research firm Gartner.

'In the last couple of years you started to see more around services and definitely this year applications will have a huge part in the theme,' she said.

Nonetheless, handset makers are expected to unveil new smartphones that allow users to surf the Internet, listen to music, watch videos and download applications to read news, update their social network profiles and play games.

The world's top mobile phone maker, Nokia, and South Korean rival LG decided to stay away from the exhibition floor this year, preferring instead to host journalists and clients at a building nearby.

আইন-শৃঙ্খলা নিয়ে দাতাদের উদ্বেগ : সরকারের মতে পরিস্থিতি ভালো

দেশে বিদ্যমান আইন-শৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতিতে উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করেছেন দাতারা। বাংলাদেশ উন্নয়ন ফোরামের (বিডিএফ) দুই দিনব্যাপী বৈঠক শেষে আয়োজিত এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে একথা বলা হয়। সরকার বলেছে, দেশে আইন-শৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতি ভালো রয়েছে। তবে এ পরিস্থিতি আরো ভালো থাকা প্রয়োজন। এ ব্যাপারে সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে। বৈঠকে দাতারা দেশে বিদ্যমান দুর্নীতির কারণেও উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করেন। তবে দুর্নীতির বিষয়টির সরকার স্বীকার করলেও আইন-শৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতির অবনতির বিষয়টি স্বীকার করেনি। দুর্নীতি সম্পর্কে সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়, দেশে দুর্নীতি রয়েছে, এটা আমরা অস্বীকার করছি না। বেশ ভালোভাবেই দুর্নীতি আছে। দুর্নীতিবিরোধী অভিযান আরও শক্তিশালী করতে সরকার দুর্নীতি দমন কমিশনকে (দুদক) আরও শক্তিশালী করার উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে।

বাংলাদেশ উন্নয়ন ফোরামের বৈঠক শেষে এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে অর্থমন্ত্রী আবুল মাল আবদুল মুহিত ও পরিকল্পনামন্ত্রী এ কে খন্দকার এসব কথা বলেন। সংবাদ সম্মেলনে অর্থনৈতিক সম্পর্ক বিভাগের সচিব মোশারফ হোসেন ভূঁইয়া, যুক্তরাজ্যের বৈদেশিক উন্নয়ন সংস্থা ডিপার্টমেন্ট ফর ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ডেভেলপমেন্টের (ডিএফআইডি) আবাসিক প্রতিনিধি ও স্থানীয় পরামর্শক গ্রুপের প্রধান ক্রিস অস্টিন বক্তব্য রাখেন। এ সময় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অর্থনীতিবিষয়ক উপদেষ্টা ড. মশিউর রহমান উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

দাতা প্রতিনিধি ক্রিস অস্টিন বলেন, তারা সরকারের দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন কর্মসূচির যেমন প্রশংসা করেছেন, তেমনি তাদের কর্মকাণ্ডে আরও জবাবদিহিতা নিশ্চিত করার ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার কথাও বলা হয়েছে। তিনি আরও বলেন, আমরা যেমন সরকারের কাছ থেকে আরও বেশি স্বচ্ছতা প্রত্যাশা করি, সরকারও তেমনি আমাদের কাছ থেকে আরও বেশি সহায়তা প্রত্যাশা করে। এখন দুই পক্ষের প্রত্যাশার মধ্যে সমন্বয় করতে হবে।

অর্থমন্ত্রী বলেন, গণতন্ত্রের অগ্রযাত্রা ছাড়া কোনো উন্নয়নই সম্ভব নয়। এ কারণে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক খাতে ব্যাপক সংস্কারের উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে। এর অংশ হিসেবে দাতারা দুদক, বিচার ব্যবস্থা ও সংসদীয় স্থায়ী কমিটিকে আরও শক্তিশালী করার পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন। জবাবে সরকার বলেছে, তারা এসব প্রতিষ্ঠানকে শক্তিশালী করতে এরই মধ্যে উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে। এ ব্যাপারে বৈঠকের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধানমন্ত্রী সুস্পষ্টভাবেই কথা বলেছেন। তিনি আরোও বলেন, স্বল্পমেয়াদি উন্নয়নের দলিল দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন কৌশলপত্র-২ (পিআরএসপি-২) এবং দীর্ঘমেয়াদি উন্নয়নে ষষ্ঠ পঞ্চবার্ষিকী পরিকল্পনা দাতারা গ্রহণ করেছেন। একই সঙ্গে এসব উন্নয়ন কর্মকাণ্ডে আরও বেশি সহায়তা দেওয়ার অঙ্গীকার ব্যক্ত করেছেন তারা। দুই পক্ষের মধ্যে কাজের সমন্বয় ঘটাতে আগামী জুনের মধ্যে যৌথ সহযোগিতার কৌশল বা জেসিএস চুক্তি করা হবে। ওই চুক্তিতে উন্নয়নের দিকনির্দেশনা থাকবে এবং সে অনুযায়ী তা বাস্তবায়ন করা হবে। দাতারা বৈঠকে তাদের দেওয়া অর্থের সদ্যবহার নিয়েও কথা তোলেন। অর্থের ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করতে যৌথ কর্মপরিকল্পনা তৈরিতে একমত হয়েছে দুই পক্ষ। এর মূল উদ্দেশ্য হচ্ছে, উন্নয়ন প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নে দক্ষতা বাড়ানো এবং অর্থের সুশ্রম বন্টন।

দাতারা সরকারের উন্নয়ন কর্মকাণ্ড বাস্তবায়নে দুর্বলতার কথা বলেছেন, আমরা তা স্বীকার করছি। এসব দুর্বলতা কাটিয়ে উঠতে একসঙ্গে কাজ করার অঙ্গীকার ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে বৈঠকে। রাজস্ব আদায়ের ক্ষেত্রে বড় ধরনের দুর্বলতার কথা বলেছেন দাতারা। তারা উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পের অর্থের জোগান বাড়াতে অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ বাড়ানোর পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন। সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে রাজস্ব বাড়াতে নেওয়া নানামুখী পদক্ষেপের কথা তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। দাতারা এ খাতে নেওয়া উদ্যোগকে সমর্থন করেছেন।

অর্থমন্ত্রী বলেন, সরকার স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহিতার বিশ্বাসী। সবক্ষেত্রে দুর্নীতি প্রতিরোধ করতে হলে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক সক্ষমতা বাড়তে হবে। ন্যায়বিচার নিশ্চিত করতে ও গণতন্ত্রকে স্থায়ী রূপ দিতে হলে বিচার ব্যবস্থা এবং সংসদীয় কমিটিকে আরও বেগবান করতে হবে। এসব বিষয়ে দাতাদের সঙ্গে দ্বিমতের কোনো কারণ নেই। জনগণের মৌলিক অধিকার নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে। দাতারা এটি সবার জন্য নিশ্চিত করতে বলেছেন। সরকারের পক্ষে বলা হয়েছে, এটি নিশ্চিত করতে সরকার বদ্ধপরিকর। তিনি জানান, বৈঠকে দাতারা বলেছেন, দেশে রাজনৈতিক সহিংসতার ঘটনা ঘটছে। সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়েছে, কিছু বিচ্ছিন্ন ঘটনা ঘটছে। এগুলো প্রতিবোধে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হয়েছে।

স্থানীয় সরকারকে শক্তিশালী করার ওপর বেশি জোর দিয়েছেন দাতারা। আমরা বলেছি, এ লক্ষ্য অর্জনে কাজ করছে সরকার। জনপ্রশাসনের দক্ষতা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন দাতারা। এজন্য তারা প্রশাসনের কর্মকাণ্ডের গুণগত মান উন্নয়নে সিভিল সার্ভিস আইন তৈরি এবং সংস্কারের উদ্যোগ নেওয়ার কথা বলেছেন। এসব ব্যাপারে এরই মধ্যে সরকার প্রয়োজনীয় পদক্ষেপ নিয়েছে। বৈঠকে দাতারা পিপিপির উদ্যোগ বাস্তবায়ন সম্পর্কে জানতে চেয়েছেন। আমি অকপটে স্বীকার করেছি, অগ্রগতি ভালো নয়। তবে চেষ্টা করছি।

বিদ্যুৎ খাতের উন্নয়নে পরিকল্পনা প্রসঙ্গে সংবাদ সম্মেলন অর্থমন্ত্রী জানান, ২০১৩ সালের মধ্যে জাতীয় স্তরে ৭ হাজার মেগাওয়াট বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদন করতে হবে। এজন্য ৯৫০ কোটি ডলার প্রয়োজন হবে। দাতারা চাহিদার কথা জেনে এ ব্যাপারে একমত পোষণ করেছেন। এ বিষয়ে অর্থমন্ত্রী জানান, তিনটি উৎস থেকে এ অর্থের জোগান দেওয়া হবে। সরকারের নিজস্ব তহবিল, দাতা সংস্থা ও বেসরকারি খাত থেকে।

পরিকল্পনামন্ত্রী এ কে খন্দকার বলেন, দাতারা অনেক বিষয়ের প্রশংসা করেছেন। দুর্নীতির বিষয়ে সমালোচনা করেছেন। তিনি বলেন, দুর্নীতি আছে, বেশ ভালোভাবেই আছে। উন্নয়ন প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নে দাতারা প্রকল্পভিত্তিক সহায়তা নেওয়ার কথা বলেছেন।

জাতীয় শিল্প উন্নয়ন পরিষদ পুনর্গঠন

প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনাকে প্রধান করে ৫৩ সদস্যের জাতীয় শিল্প উন্নয়ন পরিষদ পুনর্গঠন করা হয়েছে। এ পরিষদে মন্ত্রিসভার সদস্য, উর্ধ্বতন সরকারি কর্মকর্তা, বিশেষজ্ঞ, বিভিন্ন বাণিজ্যিক সংগঠনের প্রতিনিধিদের রাখা হয়েছে। দেশের শিল্প খাতের বিরাজমান বিভিন্ন সমস্যা দূর করে শিল্প খাতের উন্নয়নে এ পরিষদ চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে থাকে। সর্বশেষ ২০০৫ সালে এ পরিষদ গঠন করা হয়েছিল। গত ১৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয় থেকে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে প্রধান করে গঠিত এ পরিষদের তালিকা সংস্থাপন বিভাগে পাঠানো হয়েছে। সংস্থাপন বিভাগ থেকে খুব শিগগির প্রজ্ঞাপন জারি করা হবে।

দেশের কোন কোন শিল্পকে অগ্রাধিকারপ্রাপ্ত শিল্প হিসেবে ঘোষণা দেওয়া হবে, শিল্প উন্নয়নে যেসব সমস্যার উদ্ভব হয় তা না নিরসনে সরকারের ভূমিকা কী হওয়া উচিত, শিল্প খাতে বিরাজমান বিভিন্ন সমস্যা নিরসনে অনেক সময় আন্তঃমন্ত্রণালয় জটিলতার সৃষ্টি হয়। এসব সমস্যা সমাধানে সরকারের সর্বোচ্চ কর্তৃপক্ষের হস্তক্ষেপের প্রয়োজন হয়। জাতীয় শিল্প উন্নয়ন পরিষদ এসব বিষয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত দিয়ে থাকে।

বর্তমান সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার পরপরই দেশের শিল্প খাতকে অগ্রাধিকার দিয়ে নানা উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে। এরই মধ্যে বন্ধ থাকা বেশ কিছু শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠান চালু, জাহাজ নির্মাণ শিল্পসহ বেশ কিছু শিল্পকে অগ্রাধিকারপ্রাপ্ত শিল্প ঘোষণা এবং দেশের ২৭০টি রুগ্ন শিল্প পুনর্বাসন কর্মসূচি হাতে নিয়েছে। জাতীয় শিল্প উন্নয়ন পরিষদ থাকলে এসব ক্ষেত্রে যে কোনো সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে অনেক সহজ হয়। আন্তঃমন্ত্রণালয় জটিলতা এড়ানো যায়। ফলে সরকারের সিদ্ধান্ত দ্রুত বাস্তবায়ন সম্ভব হয়।

শিল্পপার্কে নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্য বিশেষ কোটা রাখা হবে

নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের দুর্নীতি প্রতিরোধে নীতি পরিবেশ উন্নয়ন শীর্ষক এক কর্মশালায় শিল্পমন্ত্রী দিলীপ বড়ুয়া বলেছেন, নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্য শিল্পপার্কে ও বিশেষ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলগুলোতে বিশেষ কোটা রাখা হচ্ছে। এসব স্থানে নারীরা নিজেদের যে কোনো ব্যবসায়িক উদ্যোগ নিতে পারবেন। আগামী বাজেটেও নারীদের জন্য বিশেষ বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হবে। কারণ অর্থনৈতিকভাবে দুর্বল হওয়ার কারণে নারী উদ্যোক্তারা এমনিতেই বেশিদূর এগোতে পারেন না। বিভিন্ন ব্যাংক ও আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানে অসহযোগিতা এবং দুর্নীতির কারণে অনেকেই হারিয়ে যান। নারীদের মধ্যে যে সৃষ্টি সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে তাকে জাগিয়ে তুলতে পারলে আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নের ধারা পাল্টে যাবে। জাতীয় প্রেসক্লাবে বাংলাদেশ উইমেন চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি ও ইউএসআইডি আয়োজিত কর্মশালায় প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্য রাখেন শিল্পমন্ত্রী দিলীপ বড়ুয়া। অনুষ্ঠানে বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের চেয়ারম্যান আফতাব-উল ইসলাম। উইমেন চেম্বারের সভাপতি সেলিমা আহমেদের সভাপতিত্বে অন্যদের মধ্যে বক্তব্য রাখেন ডেমক্রেসিওয়ারচের নির্বাহী পরিচালক তালেয়া রেহমান, উইমেন চেম্বারের সহ-সভাপতি সঞ্জীতা আহমেদ ও সেলিমা কাদের প্রমুখ।

কর্মশালায় নারী উদ্যোক্তারা নানা অভিযোগ তুলে ধরেন বলেন, দুর্নীতির কারণে নারী উদ্যোক্তারা ঝরে পড়ছে। গ্রামীণ নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের বিকাশ বাধাগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে। তারা ব্যাংকগুলোর অসহযোগিতা, কাস্টমস ও ভ্যাট কর্মকর্তাদের হয়রানির অভিযোগও তুলে ধরেন। আফতাব-উল ইসলাম বলেন, এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশন নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের সব ধরনের সেবা অগ্রাধিকার ভিত্তিতে দেওয়ার পদক্ষেপ নিয়েছে। উইমেন চেম্বারের সভাপতি সেলিমা আহমেদ বলেন, দুর্নীতিতে সবচেয়ে কম সম্পৃক্ত কিন্তু দুর্নীতির প্রত্যক্ষ এবং পরোক্ষভাবে বেশি ক্ষতির শিকার হচ্ছে নারীরা।

সঠিক প্রণোদনা দিলে উন্নয়নশীল দেশে প্রবৃদ্ধি বাড়বে : আঙ্কটাড

অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নের ক্ষেত্রে বর্তমানে যেসব প্রযুক্তি আছে তার সঙ্গে সঠিক পরিকল্পনা কৌশল ও প্রণোদনা দেওয়া গেলে উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোতে অনেক বেশি প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করা সম্ভব। সাশ্রয়ী জ্বালানির ব্যবহার, টেকসই কৃষি এবং নবায়নযোগ্য বিদ্যুতের ওপর ভিত্তি করে এ অগ্রগতি করা যাবে। জাতিসংঘের শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য উন্নয়ন সংস্থা আঙ্কটাডের এক রিপোর্টে এসব তথ্য তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানির ক্ষেত্রে ব্যাপক জোর দিয়েছে আঙ্কটাড। রিপোর্টে বাংলাদেশে সৌরশক্তির মাধ্যমে গ্রামীণ ব্যাংকের প্রতিষ্ঠান গ্রামীণ শক্তির দৃষ্টান্ত তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। এতে বলা হয়, এ কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে ৪০ হাজার গ্রামে প্রায় ২০ লাখ মানুষের নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি ব্যবহার করে আবাসস্থল ও বায়োগ্যাস পরিচালনা করছে।

এ ছাড়া ভারতের এমপাওয়ার নামে প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে একইভাবে গ্রামীণ এলাকায় নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানির মাধ্যমে কীভাবে গ্রামের মানুষের অবস্থার উন্নতি করা যায় তার চিত্র ফুটে উঠেছে। তবে সব পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়ন ও কার্যকর অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধির জন্য সরকারের প্রত্যক্ষ ভূমিকা নিশ্চিত করার তাগিদ দেওয়া হয়েছে। এতে বলা হয়, অর্থনৈতিক মন্দার প্রভাবসহ জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন এবং খাদ্যমূল্য নিয়ে উদ্বেগ বেড়েছে। রিপোর্টে এগুলোকে ব্যবহার করে উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোতে প্রবৃদ্ধি বাড়ানোর সুপারিশ করা হয়েছে।

রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, বিপুল পরিমাণ সাশ্রয়ী জ্বালানির ব্যবহার, টেকসই কৃষি উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থা জোরদার এবং গ্রাম এলাকায় নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানির প্রতি জোর দেওয়া প্রয়োজন। এর মাধ্যমে ব্যয় কমে আসার পাশাপাশি এ থেকে দ্রুত আয় সংস্থান হতে পারে। তবে এজন্য সরকারকে বাজার সম্প্রসারণে বাধা দূর করতে হবে। উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোতে জ্বালানি সাশ্রয়ী বিনিয়োগ বাড়লে সার্বিক দিক দিয়ে ব্যয়ও অনেক কমবে। উন্নত দেশের তুলনায় অনুন্নত ও উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলো এতে বেশি লাভবান হবে। কৃষি খাতের অগ্রগতির

জন্য অর্গানিক ফার্মিং বড় ধরনের ভূমিকা রাখতে পারে উল্লেখ করে রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, অর্গানিক ফার্মিংয়ের ক্ষেত্রে ৩টি সুপারিশ বাস্তবায়ন করা গেলে অনেক কম খরচে পূর্ব আফ্রিকার দরিদ্র দেশগুলোসহ অনুন্নত দেশগুলোতে প্রবৃদ্ধি বাড়বে।

বাংলাদেশ ও ভারতের মধ্যে সীমান্ত হাট শুরু হচ্ছে

বাংলাদেশ ও ভারত সীমান্তের প্রত্যন্ত অঞ্চলে বসবাসকারি জনগণের ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যের সুবিধার্থে আগামী পহেলা বৈশাখ দু-দেশের মধ্যে সীমান্ত হাট শুরু হচ্ছে। প্রাথমিকভাবে উভয় দেশের ৩টি স্থানকে নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে। পরীক্ষামূলকভাবে সিলেটের গোয়াইন ঘাট উপজেলার সোনার হাট (ভারতের লিংখাট), সুনামগঞ্জ জেলার তাহেরপুর উপজেলার লাউয়ার ঘর (ভারতের কালিয়া চর) এবং কুড়িগ্রাম জেলার বাজিতপুর উপজেলার বালিয়া বাড়ি (ভারতের নলিয়া কাটা) নামক স্থানে হাটগুলো বসবে। ভারতীয় হাইকমিশনার রঞ্জিত মিত্তার বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের যুগ্মসচিব ড. মোঃ রুহুল আমিন সরকার এবং ভারতীয় দূতাবাসের প্রথম সচিব সুশীল সিংহল উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

আলোচনাকালে যৌথ ইশতেহার-এর ৩২ থেকে ৩৮ নং অনুচ্ছেদে বর্ণিত নির্দেশনা অনুসারে দু'দেশের মধ্যে বাণিজ্য সম্প্রসারণের লক্ষ্যে বিভিন্ন পদক্ষেপ বাস্তবায়নের কাজ আগামী পাঁচ থেকে ছয় মাসের মধ্যে সম্পন্ন করা সম্ভব হবে বলে উভয়ে আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করেন। কার্যক্রম বাস্তবায়নের পূর্বে উভয় দেশের বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের যুগ্মসচিব ও সচিব পর্যায়ে সভা করে পরিকল্পনা চূড়ান্তকরণ এবং উভয় দেশের বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী পর্যায়ে বৈঠকের মাধ্যমে চুক্তি সম্পন্ন করা হবে। এর মাধ্যমে দু'দেশের মধ্যে বাণিজ্য বৃদ্ধি পাবে এবং বিদ্যমান বাণিজ্য ঘাটতি কমে আসবে বলে উভয়ে আশা প্রকাশ করেন। উল্লেখ্য, ২০০৮-০৯ অর্থবছরে ভারত বাংলাদেশ থেকে ২৭৭ মিলিয়ন মার্কিন ডলার মূল্যের পণ্য আমদানি করেছে, পক্ষান্তরে বাংলাদেশে রপ্তানি করেছে ২৮৪৩ মিলিয়ন ডলার মূল্যের পণ্য।

এফডিআই বাড়তে চায় সরকার

দেশে সরাসরি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে জোরালো উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে সরকার। এর আওতায় বিদেশে রোড-শো আয়োজনের মাধ্যমে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীদের মধ্যে দেশে বিনিয়োগের সুবিধা তুলে ধরা হচ্ছে। একইসঙ্গে সরকারের নীতি-সহায়তা বাড়তে প্রচলিত নীতিমালা শিথিল করা হচ্ছে। দেশের শিল্প, শেয়ারবাজার, বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানি খাতে বিনিয়োগকে অগ্রাধিকার দিচ্ছে।

এদিকে চলতি অর্থবছরের গত জুলাই থেকে অক্টোবর পর্যন্ত চার মাসে দেশে সরাসরি বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই) গত অর্থবছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় প্রায় অর্ধেক নেমে আসে। চলতি অর্থবছরের ওই সময়ে এফডিআই এসেছে ২০ কোটি ৭০ লাখ ডলার। গত অর্থবছরের একই সময়ে এসেছিল ৪০ কোটি ২০ লাখ ডলার। অর্থনৈতিক মন্দার কারণে বিশ্বজুড়েই বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ কমে গেছে। এর প্রভাব বাংলাদেশেও পড়েছে, বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ কমে গেছে। মন্দার মধ্যেও গত অর্থবছরে বাংলাদেশে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়লেও এখন তা কমে যাচ্ছে। এ অবস্থায় সরকার বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে নানামুখী পদক্ষেপ নিচ্ছে।

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের গত পাঁচ বছরের এফডিআইর পরিসংখ্যান থেকে দেখা যায়, ২০০৪-০৫ সালে ৮০ কোটি, ২০০৫-০৬ অর্থবছরে ৭৪ কোটি ৩০ লাখ, ২০০৬-০৭ অর্থবছরে ৭৬ কোটি, ২০০৭-০৮ অর্থবছরে ৬৪ কোটি এবং ২০০৮-০৯ অর্থবছরে এফডিআই এসেছে ৯৪ কোটি ১০ লাখ ডলার। ওই পাঁচ বছরের মধ্যে সবচেয়ে বেশি এফডিআই এসেছে শেষ অর্থবছরে। ওই সময় বিদেশ থেকে এফডিআই তুলে নেওয়ায় অনেকেই এর একটি অংশ বাংলাদেশে বিনিয়োগ করেছেন। মন্দার শুরুতে বাংলাদেশে এর কোনো প্রভাব

পড়েনি। তখন অনেকেই বলেছিলেন, বাংলাদেশ দেরি করে মন্দার মধ্যে ঢুকবে এবং দেরিতে মন্দার বলয় থেকে বেরুবে। এ কারণে ওই সময় এফডিআই বাড়লেও এখন তা কমতে শুরু করেছে।

দেশে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে আগে সরকারি খাতে বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানোর কথা বলেছেন উদ্যোক্তারা। বিনিয়োগকারীরা যখন দেখবেন সরকার টাকা খরচ করছে, তখন বেসরকারি উদ্যোক্তারা টাকা খরচ করতে এগিয়ে আসবেন। এ ছাড়া বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের জন্য আগে স্থানীয় বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে হবে। এর মাধ্যমে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীরা এগিয়ে আসবেন। বেসরকারি খাতে বিনিয়োগ না বাড়লে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীরা সাধারণত আসতে চান না। বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানোর জন্য একইসঙ্গে সরকারকে গ্যাস ও বিদ্যুতের নিশ্চয়তা দিতে হবে। বর্তমানে চালু শিল্প কারখানাগুলোকেই সচল রাখা সম্ভব হচ্ছে না। গ্যাস ও বিদ্যুৎ সংকটের কারণে এগুলো স্বাভাবিক উৎপাদন করতে পারবে না।

বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের এই নিম্নমুখী প্রবণতা দেখে সরকার বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানোর উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে। সম্প্রতি শিল্প খাতে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়কে উদ্যোগ নিতে বলা হয়েছে। এ লক্ষ্যে তারা শিল্প খাতে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ নীতিমালা শিথিল করার উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে। ইপিজেডে বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে এগুলোতে বিনিয়োগ নীতিমালাও শিথিল করা হচ্ছে। এর মাধ্যমে এগুলোতে বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানো হবে। এরই অংশ হিসেবে বাংলাদেশের বিনিয়োগ বিষয়ক প্রতিনিধি দল সম্প্রতি থাইল্যান্ড, লন্ডন ও নিউ ইয়র্কে রোড শোর আয়োজন করেছে। এগুলোর মাধ্যমে তারা বাংলাদেশে বিনিয়োগের নানা ধরনের সুবিধার কথা তুলে ধরেছে। সম্প্রতি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর জ্বালানিবিষয়ক উপদেষ্টা ড. তৌফিক-ই-এলাহী চৌধুরীর নেতৃত্বে একটি প্রতিনিধি দল আমেরিকায় রোড শো করেছে। সেখানে তারা প্রবাসী বাঙালিসহ যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের বিনিয়োগকারীদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করেছেন।

এপ্রিলে চালু হচ্ছে পুল ফান্ড

বার্ষিক উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির (এডিপি) অর্থের সর্বোচ্চ ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করতে আগামী এপ্রিল থেকে অর্থবছরের তৃতীয় প্রান্তিকের (এপ্রিল-জুন) জন্য গঠন করা হয়েছে পুল ফান্ড। এর আওতায় কোনো উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পের অর্থ খরচ করতে না পারলে অন্য প্রকল্পে বরাদ্দ দেয়া হবে। তবে সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রণালয়কে জানাতে হবে চলতি অর্থবছরে প্রকল্পের অনুকূলে বরাদ্দ করা অর্থের কতটা ব্যবহার করতে পারবে না। সেই অর্থ জমা থাকবে পুল ফান্ডে। পরে তা খরচ করা যাবে। এডিপির বাস্তবায়ন বাড়তে প্রথমবারের মতো এই ফান্ড গঠনের উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে। অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্রে এসব তথ্য জানা গেছে।

গতানুগতিকভাবে অর্থবছরের শেষ প্রান্তিকে এসে উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পের অর্থ খরচের হিড়িক পড়ে যায়, শুরু হয় যে করেই হোক টাকা খরচ করতে হবে। এই প্রতিযোগিতায় পড়ে প্রকল্পের টাকা যেনতেনভাবে খরচ করে ফেলা হয়। তবে অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়ের কর্মকর্তারা জানান, পুল ফান্ড গঠন করা হলে এবং এতে অর্থের জোগান এলে এডিপিতে নিম্নমানের ব্যয় কমে যাবে। গত নভেম্বরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার সভাপতিত্বে অনুষ্ঠিত আর্থিক ব্যবস্থাপনা ও অর্থনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি বিশ্লেষণ সংক্রান্ত সভায় পুল ফান্ড গঠনের সুপারিশ করা হয়। সেই সুপারিশের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে সম্প্রতি প্রতি অর্থবছরে শেষ প্রান্তিকে পুল ফান্ড গঠনের নীতিগত সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়। এই ফান্ডের বাস্তবায়ন নিশ্চিত করতে অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয় থেকে সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগগুলোর উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পের অগ্রগতির বিষয়টিও তদারকি করা হবে। উন্নয়ন প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের বিষয়ে এবং বরাদ্দ অর্থের ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করতে বিভিন্ন দেশে এ ধরনের ফান্ড রয়েছে।

এডিপি বাস্তবায়নের ধীরগতির কারণে বছরের শেষ দিকে এসে কাটছাঁট করে সংশোধন করা হয়। সংশোধিত এডিপিও বেশিরভাগ সময় বাস্তবায়ন করা

সম্ভব হচ্ছে না। এর মধ্যে গত অর্থবছরের সংশোধিত এডিপি বাস্তবায়ন হয়েছে ৮৬ শতাংশ। অব্যবহৃত থেকেছে ৩৩৫০ কোটি টাকা। ২০০৭-০৮ অর্থবছরের সংশোধিত এডিপির ৮২ শতাংশ বাস্তবায়ন হয়েছে। অব্যবহৃত টাকার পরিমাণ হচ্ছে ৪ হাজার কোটি টাকা। ২০০৬-০৭ অর্থবছরে সংশোধিত এডিপির বাস্তবায়ন হয়েছে ৮৩ শতাংশ। অব্যবহৃত ৩ হাজার ১০০ কোটি টাকা। ২০০৫-০৬ অর্থবছরে সংশোধিত এডিপির ৯১ শতাংশ বাস্তবায়ন হয়েছে। ওই অর্থবছরে অব্যবহৃত থেকেছে ৪ হাজার ১০০ কোটি টাকা।

বাংলাদেশের বাজেট প্রণয়নের নিয়ম হলো এক অর্থবছরের অর্থ অন্য অর্থবছরে ব্যবহার করা যায় না। অর্থাৎ প্রতি অর্থবছরের হিসাব সেই অর্থবছরেই শেষ করতে হয়। পৃথিবীর বেশিরভাগ দেশেই এমন বাজেট প্রণয়নের নীতি গ্রহণ করা হয়। কিন্তু বাংলাদেশে প্রতিবছরই এডিপির বিপুল পরিমাণ অর্থ অব্যবহৃত থেকে যায়। কিছু মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগ প্রতি বছরই নিজ নিজ উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পগুলো পুরো বাস্তবায়ন করতে পারে না। এমনকি অর্থবছরের শেষ সময়ে অর্থ খরচ করতে গিয়ে প্রকল্পের গুণগত মান নিশ্চিত করা সম্ভব হয় না। এমন প্রেক্ষাপটে এডিপির অর্থ পুরোপুরি ব্যবহার করার উদ্দেশ্যে পুল ফান্ড ব্যবস্থা চালু করা যাচ্ছে। অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্রে জানা গেছে, মার্চে চলতি অর্থবছরের সংশোধিত এডিপি চূড়ান্ত হবে। এপ্রিলের শুরুতেই পুল ফান্ড কার্যকর করা হবে। এরপর প্রতিটি মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগকে সংশোধিত এডিপিভুক্ত প্রকল্পগুলোর কী পরিমাণ অর্থ ব্যয় করা সম্ভব হবে না জানানোর জন্য ১৫ থেকে ২০ দিন সময় দেওয়া হবে। মন্ত্রণালয়গুলোর সম্ভাব্য অব্যয়িত অর্থ পুল ফান্ডে জমা থাকবে। অর্থবছরের বিগত তিন প্রান্তিকে যেসব মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগের এডিপি বাস্তবায়ন ভালো সেসব মন্ত্রণালয়ের প্রকল্পের অনুকূলে তা বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হবে। সে ক্ষেত্রে কয়েক বছর মেয়াদি প্রকল্পই অগ্রাধিকার পাবে।

পাঁচ বছরে কর আদায় বেড়েছে দ্বিগুণ

রাজস্ব আদায়ে প্রত্যক্ষ বা আয়করের অবদান ক্রমেই বাড়বে। গত পাঁচ বছরে আয়কর আদায় বেড়েছে দ্বিগুণেরও বেশি। আলোচ্য সময়ে আয়কর খাতে প্রবৃদ্ধিও প্রায় দ্বিগুণ হয়েছে। কর প্রদানে জনগণের সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি, আইন সহজ এবং আয়কর খাতে ব্যাপক সংস্কারের ফলে এ সুফল পাওয়া গেছে বলে সংশ্লিষ্ট মহল মনে করে।

সাম্প্রতিক বছরগুলোতে কর প্রদানের উদ্বুদ্ধকরণে গৃহীত কর্মসূচির ফলে সাধারণ মানুষের মধ্যে কর দেওয়ার আত্মহ আগের চেয়ে বেড়েছে। আমদানি পর্যায় থেকে যে পরিমাণ রাজস্ব আদায় হয়ে থাকে তা আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কযুক্ত। পণ্য দামের ওঠা-নামার ওপর নির্ভর কর আমদানি শুল্ক আদায়। মুক্ত বাজার অর্থনীতির আলোকে বাণিজ্য উদারিকরণের নীতি থেকে বাংলাদেশ আলাদা নয়। এ প্রেক্ষাপটে অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ সংগ্রহের ওপর বেশি মনোযোগ দেওয়া অভ্যন্তরীণ শুল্কতুপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠেছে। বাংলাদেশেও অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ সংগ্রহে জোরদার করার নীতি গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। এর অন্যতম একটি খাত হচ্ছে আয়কর।

এনবিআর জানায়, পাঁচ বছর আগে আয়কর আদায় হয় ৫ হাজার ৫৭৭ কোটি টাকা। গত অর্থবছরে আয়কর আদায় বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ১৩ হাজার ৫৫৭ কোটি টাকা। অর্থাৎ আলোচ্য সময়ে প্রত্যক্ষ বা আয়কর আদায় দ্বিগুণের বেশি বেড়েছে। পাঁচ বছর আগে আয়কর আদায়ে প্রবৃদ্ধি ছিল শতকরা ১৮ শতাংশ যেখানে গত বছর প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে ৩৫ শতাংশ। পর্যালোচনায় দেখা গেছে, বিগত পাঁচ অর্থবছরের মধ্যে দুই অর্থবছর ছাড়া বাকি তিন অর্থবছরে লক্ষ্যমাত্রার চেয়ে বেশি আদায় হয়েছে। চলতি অর্থবছরেও লক্ষ্যমাত্রার চেয়ে বেশি অর্জন হবে বলে এনবিআর আশা করছে। চলতি অর্থবছরে আয়কর আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে ১৬ হাজার ৫৬০ কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে জুলাই থেকে ডিসেম্বর পর্যন্ত আদায় হয়েছে ৬ হাজার ৪০ কোটি টাকা বা লক্ষ্যমাত্রার চেয়ে ১২০ কোটি টাকা বেশি।

২০০৪-০৫ অর্থবছরে ৫ হাজার ৮৫০ কোটি টাকার লক্ষ্যমাত্রার বিপরীতে আদায় হয়েছিল ৫ হাজার ৫৭৭ কোটি টাকা। এর পরের বছর লক্ষ্যমাত্রার চেয়ে বেশি আদায় হয়েছে। ২০০৫-০৬ অর্থবছরে লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ৬ হাজার ৩৯৪ কোটি টাকা, এর বিপরীতে আদায় হয়েছে ৭ হাজার ১৬২ কোটি টাকা। তার পরের বছর আবার ঘাটতি হয়। ২০০৬-০৭ অর্থবছরে ৮ হাজার ৯২৪ কোটি টাকার বিপরীতে আদায় হয় ৮ হাজার ৭২১ কোটি টাকা পরবর্তী দুই বছর আয়কর আদায়ে বেশি সাফল্য এসেছে। ২০০৭-০৮ অর্থবছরে ১১ হাজার ৫ কোটি টাকা লক্ষ্যমাত্রার বিপরীতে আদায় হয় ১১ হাজার ৭৪৪ কোটি টাকা এবং ২০০৮-০৯ অর্থবছরে ১৩ হাজার ৪৯ কোটি টাকা লক্ষ্যমাত্রার বিপরীতে আদায় হয় ১৩ হাজার ৫৫৭ কোটি টাকা। আয়কর খাত থেকে যে আদায় হয় তা মোট রাজস্বের শতকরা ২৫ ভাগ। গত বছর মোট রাজস্ব আদায় হয় ৫২ হাজার ৪৭৬ কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে আয়করের অবদান ১৩ হাজার ৫৫৭ কোটি টাকা। আয়কর আদায়ের সবচেয়ে বড় খাত হচ্ছে উৎস কর। উৎস কর খাত থেকে মোট আয়করের ৬৫ ভাগ আদায় হয়। ব্যক্তিশ্রেণী মাত্র ৩ শতাংশ কর প্রদান করেন। বাকি কর আসে কোম্পানি কর, ভ্রমণ কর ও অন্যান্য উৎস থেকে।

রেমিটেন্স প্রবাহে শুভ সূচনা

প্রবাসীদের পাঠানো রেমিটেন্স প্রবাহে শুভ সূচনা দিয়েই শুরু হয়েছে নতুন বছরের যাত্রা। বছরের প্রথম মাসে অর্থাৎ জানুয়ারিতে প্রবাসীদের পাঠানো রেমিটেন্স এসেছে ৯৫ কোটি ৯ লাখ ১৮ হাজার ডলার। অর্থবছরের প্রথম সাত মাসে (জুলাই থেকে জানুয়ারি) রেমিটেন্স এসেছে ৬৪৮ কোটি ৪১ লাখ ২০ হাজার ডলার। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের তৈরি সর্বশেষ প্রতিবেদনে এ তথ্য পাওয়া গেছে। রেমিটেন্স প্রবাহের এই উচ্চ প্রবৃদ্ধির ফলে দেশের বৈদেশিক মুদ্রার রিজার্ভও বেশ শক্তিশালী অবস্থানে রয়েছে।

গত জানুয়ারিতে প্রবাসীদের পাঠানো রেমিটেন্স এসেছে ৯৫ কোটি ৯ লাখ ১৮ হাজার ডলার। গত বছরের একই সময় রেমিটেন্স এসেছিল ৮৫ কোটি ৯০ লাখ ডলার। গত ডিসেম্বরে রেমিটেন্স আসে ৮৭ কোটি ৩৮ লাখ ডলার, নভেম্বরে আরও রেকর্ড ১০৫ কোটি ডলার, অক্টোবরে আসে ৯০ কোটি ডলার, সেপ্টেম্বরে আসে ৮৮ কোটি ৭৫ লাখ ডলার, আগস্টে ৯৩ কোটি ৫১ লাখ ডলার এবং জুলাইয়ে আসে ৮৮ কোটি ৫৩ লাখ ডলার। এর মধ্যে গত নভেম্বরেই সবচেয়ে বেশি রেমিটেন্স এসেছে। ওই মাসে ঈদের কারণে রেমিটেন্স বেশি এসেছিল।

চলতি ২০০৯-১০ অর্থবছরের প্রথম সাত মাসে মোট রেমিটেন্স আসে ৬৪৮ কোটি ৪১ লাখ ২০ হাজার ডলার। গত ২০০৮-০৯ অর্থবছরে মোট রেমিটেন্স আসে ১৬৮ কোটি ৯২ লাখ ৬০ হাজার মার্কিন ডলার। জানুয়ারিতে সবচেয়ে বেশি রেমিটেন্স আসে বেসরকারি খাতের ব্যাংকগুলোর মাধ্যমে। এই সময়ে বেসরকারি ব্যাংকগুলোর ৬৭ কোটি ১৬ লাখ ৯১ হাজার ডলার রেমিটেন্স আসে। সরকারি মালিকানাধীন চার বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক রেমিটেন্স আহরণ করে ২৫ কোটি ৩৩ লাখ ৮৩ হাজার ডলার। বিশেষায়িত দুই ব্যাংক ১ কোটি ২৮ লাখ ৩০ হাজার ডলার এবং বিদেশি ব্যাংকগুলো আহরণ করেছে ১ কোটি ৩ লাখ ২০ হাজার ডলার। রেমিটেন্স আহরণের ক্ষেত্রে সবচেয়ে এগিয়ে রয়েছে বেসরকারি খাতের ইসলামী ব্যাংক। জানুয়ারি মাসে ইসলামী ব্যাংকের মাধ্যমে রেমিটেন্স আসে ২৭ কোটি ২ লাখ ৪৬ হাজার কোটি ডলার। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্মকর্তারা বলেছেন, রেমিটেন্স পাঠানো ঝুঁকিমুক্ত করতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের বিশেষ পদক্ষেপের ফলে প্রবাসীরা এখন ব্যাংকিং চ্যানেলের মাধ্যমে রেমিটেন্স পাঠাতে উদ্বৃত্ত হচ্ছে। রেমিটেন্স ব্যবসা অনেকটা লাভজনক হওয়ায় বেসরকারি বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংকগুলো রেমিটেন্স প্রবাহের ওপর গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে

অনেক বেশি। তবে রেমিটেন্স প্রেরণের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যয় কমে এলে বৈধ চ্যানেলের মাধ্যমে রেমিটেন্স প্রবাহ আরও বেড়ে যাবে বলে আশা করছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

বিশেষ করে ছত্তি প্রতিরোধে মানিলাশারিং কার্যক্রম জোরদার, বেসরকারি খাতের ব্যাংকগুলোকে সহজ শর্তে প্রবাসে এলেক্সেচেন্স হাউস প্রতিষ্ঠার সুযোগ দেওয়া, রেমিটেন্স পাঠানোর ক্ষেত্রে সার্ভিস চার্জ কমানো, দ্রুত সময়ের মধ্যে আত্মীয়-স্বজনের কাছে রেমিটেন্সের অর্থ পাঠানোর ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণসহ দেশে-বিদেশে ব্যাপক প্রচারণা চালানোর কারণে বৈধ পথে রেমিটেন্স প্রবাহ বাড়ছে।

অনলাইনে পাওয়া যাবে সব ধরনের ব্যাংকিং সেবা

অনলাইনে গ্রাহকদের জন্য সব ধরনের ব্যাংকিং সেবা নিশ্চিত করতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক জোরাল উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে। এর মধ্যে রয়েছে অনলাইনে সব ধরনের চেক লেনদেন, টাকা তোলা, এলসি খোলা, একাউন্ট খোলা, লেনদেনের বিবরণী নেওয়া, অন্য ব্যাংকের সঙ্গে লেনদেন সম্পন্ন করা। এসব কাজের জন্য আর ব্যাংকে যেতে হবে না। এটিএন মেশিনের মাধ্যমে বা অনলাইনেই এসব কাজ করা যাবে। এ জন্য ব্যাংকগুলো প্রয়োজনীয় কাঠামো তৈরি করছে।

এর মধ্যে চেকের মাধ্যমে দ্রুত টাকা তোলার ব্যবস্থা ইতিমধ্যেই চালু করা হয়েছে। এর মাধ্যমে এক ব্যাংকের চেক দিয়ে অন্য ব্যাংকের মাধ্যমে দ্রুত টাকা তোলা যাবে। আগে যেখানে এক ব্যাংকের চেক অন্য ব্যাংকের মাধ্যমে ভাঙতে ৪ থেকে ১৫ দিন সময় লাগত, এখন তা করতে লাগবে ২ ঘণ্টা। এ লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশ অটোমেটেড চেক প্রসেসিং সিস্টেম (বিএসসিসিএস) নামের একটি প্রকল্প নেওয়া হয়েছে। প্রকল্পটি এখনও পূর্ণাঙ্গভাবে চালু হয়নি। তবে ঢাকা শহরের বেসরকারি ও বিদেশি ব্যাংকগুলোর মধ্যে ইতিমধ্যে চালু হয়ে গেছে। সরকারি ব্যাংকগুলোতে এ বছরের মধ্যে চালু হবে। উন্নয়ন সহযোগী সংস্থা যুক্তরাজ্যের ডিপার্টমেন্ট ফর ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ডেভেলপমেন্টের (ডিএফআইডি) সহযোগিতায় প্রকল্পটির কার্যক্রম বাস্তবায়ন হচ্ছে। কয়েক বছর ধরে বিদেশে অবস্থানরত বাংলাদেশের কর্মীদের পাঠানো রেমিটেন্সের প্রবাহ বাড়ার অন্যতম কারণ হচ্ছে বিদেশ থেকে অর্থ পাঠানোর ক্ষেত্রে ইলেক্ট্রনিক ব্যবস্থার প্রবর্তন করা। ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স মাধ্যমে লেনদেন হওয়াতে বিদেশ থেকে কর্মীরা তাদের অর্থ দ্রুত দেশে পাঠাতে পারছেন। এ ব্যবস্থা চালুর ফলে ছত্তির মাধ্যমে টাকা পাঠানোর প্রবণতাও আগের চেয়ে অনেক কমে গেছে।

বাণিজ্যমেলায় ৩০ কোটি টাকার স্পট অর্ডার

ঢাকা আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যমেলার ৩৮ দিনব্যাপী আয়োজনে আন্তর্জাতিক ক্রেতাদের কাছ থেকে স্পট অর্ডার পাওয়া গেছে প্রায় ২৫ কোটি টাকার। তবে সব মিলিয়ে তা বেড়ে দাঁড়াবে প্রায় ৩০ কোটি টাকা। মেলার সমাপনী অনুষ্ঠানের বক্তব্যে এ তথ্য জানান বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী ফারুক খান। গত বছরের তুলনায় ১০ কোটি টাকা বেশি। আর দেশি বিভিন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানে বিক্রির পরিমাণ প্রায় ৫০ কোটি টাকা। আগের বছরের মেলায় বিক্রির পরিমাণ ছিল প্রায় ৪২ কোটি ৬৬ লাখ টাকা।

মেলার আয়োজক রফতানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) জানিয়েছে, এবারের বাণিজ্যমেলার রফতানি আদেশ পাওয়া গেছে বেশি। রফতানি আদেশ পাওয়ার ওপর মেলার সফলতা নির্ভর করে না উল্লেখ করে মেলা কমিটির সচিব আবদুর রহমান বলেন, মেলায় দেশ-বিদেশের পণ্য প্রদর্শনীর সুযোগ পান উদ্যোক্তারা। দেশি প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোর পণ্য সম্পর্কে ব্যাপকভাবে জানতে ও

রফতানি বাজার তৈরিতে মেলা বড় ধরনের ভূমিকা পালন করে। উল্লেখ্য, এ বছরের মেলায় আন্তর্জাতিক বিভিন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানের অংশগ্রহণের হার ছিল কম। গত বছরের চেয়ে মেলায় ক্রেতা-দর্শনার্থীদের ভিড় ছিল প্রচুর। এবারের মেলায় দর্শক এসেছে প্রায় ৫০ লাখ। আয়োজক রফতানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো (ইপিবি) সূত্র জানিয়েছে, বাণিজ্যমেলায় অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোর রফতানি আদেশ সম্পর্কে ৬ জানুয়ারী পর্যন্ত মতামত সংগ্রহ করা হয়। সেখান থেকে প্রাপ্ত তথ্য অনুযায়ী স্পট অর্ডারের পরিমাণ প্রায় ২১ কোটি টাকা বা ৩ দশমিক ১৩ মিলিয়ন ডলার।

ইপিবি জানায়, গত ১ জানুয়ারি শুরু হয় ১৫তম আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যমেলা। পরে এক সপ্তাহ সময় বাড়ানো হয়। মেলায় মোট স্টল ও প্যাভিলিয়ন ছিল ৬৬৩টি। এর মধ্যে স্টল ৩০৮টি, মিনি প্যাভিলিয়ন ৪৫, প্রিমিয়ার মিনি প্যাভিলিয়ন চারটি, প্যাভিলিয়ন ৬০টি, প্রিমিয়ার প্যাভিলিয়ন পাঁচটি এবং স্পেশাল প্যাভিলিয়ন ছিল ছয়টি। এছাড়া বাইরে খাবারের দোকান ছিল ১২টি। বাংলাদেশসহ মোট ১১টি দেশ মেলায় অংশ নেয়। সমাপনী অনুষ্ঠানে জানানো হয়, এবারের মেলায় প্রায় ৩৫ লাখ লোকসমাগম হয়েছে। তবে ইপিবি সূত্র জানায়, সব মিলিয়ে মেলায় দর্শনার্থী এসেছে প্রায় ৫০ লাখ। টিকিট বিক্রি থেকে আয় হয়েছে বিপুল পরিমাণ অর্থ। ভ্যাট ও কাস্টমস বিভাগের কর্মকর্তারা জানান, এবারের মেলার ভ্যাট আদায়ের হার অনুযায়ী প্রায় ৫০ কোটি টাকায় বিক্রি হয়েছে।

আগামী অর্ধবছরে রাজস্ব আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ৭২ হাজার কোটি টাকা

আগামী অর্ধবছরের বাজেট তৈরির কাজ ইতিমধ্যে শুরু হয়েছে। এর অংশ হিসেবে ওই অর্ধবছরের জন্য সরকার রাজস্ব আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণের প্রস্তাব করেছে প্রায় ৭২ হাজার ৬০০ কোটি টাকা। আদায়ের প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ধরা হয়েছে ২০ শতাংশ। এই লক্ষ্যমাত্রা আদায়ে আয়কর ও মূল্যসংযোজন করের (ভ্যাট) ওপর বেশি জোরে দেওয়া হবে। চলতি অর্ধবছরে রাজস্ব আদায়ে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ধরা হয়েছে ১৭ শতাংশ। চলতি অর্ধবছর রাজস্ব আদায়ে লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে ৬১ হাজার কোটি টাকা। অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্রে জানা গেছে, সম্পদ কমিটি আগামী অর্ধবছরের জন্য ৭২ হাজার ৫৯০ কোটি টাকার সম্ভাব্য রাজস্ব আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণের প্রস্তাব করে সে অনুযায়ী প্রাক-বাজেট প্রস্তুতি নিতে বলেছে। একই সঙ্গে কমিটি চলতি অর্ধবছরের জন্য ৬২ হাজার ৮০০ কোটি টাকা লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করে। সম্প্রতি সম্পদ কমিটির বৈঠকে এই নির্দেশনা দেওয়া হয়। সম্পদ কমিটির প্রস্তাব জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড (এনবিআর) পরীক্ষা করে দেখেছে।

এনবিআর জানায়, রাজস্ব আদায় নির্ভর করে অর্থনীতির স্থিতিশীলতার ওপর। সামগ্রিকভাবে দেশের অর্থনীতির চাঙ্গা থাকলে আদায় বেড়ে যায়। আগামী বাজেটে আয়কর ও ভ্যাট আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা বেশি নির্ধারণের প্রস্তাব করা হয়েছে। আয়করের ক্ষেত্রে শতকরা ২৫ ভাগ এবং ভ্যাটের ক্ষেত্রে ২৬ থেকে ২৭ ভাগ প্রবৃদ্ধি ধরা হয়েছে। বর্তমানে আয়কর এবং ভ্যাট আদায়ে যথাক্রমে ২০ ও ২২ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে। সরকার যে ভ্যাট আইন পরিবর্তন করছে, তা আগামী বাজেট থেকে বাস্তবায়ন শুরু হবে। প্রস্তাবিত ভ্যাট আইন কার্যকর হলে এই খাতে বিদ্যমানের চেয়ে আদায় অন্তত ৩০ ভাগ রাজস্ব আদায় বেড়ে যাবে। বর্তমানে ভ্যাট থেকে আদায় হয় ২০ হাজার কোটি টাকা। আয়কর আদায় বাড়তে অটোমেশন পদ্ধতি চালু করা হয়েছে। জোর দেওয়া হয়েছে অডিটের ওপর। আরও বেশি লোককে করের আওতায় নিয়ে আসার উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে। এসব উদ্যোগের ফলে আশা করা যাচ্ছে আগামী অর্ধবছরে আয়কর থেকে বেশি আদায় সম্ভব হবে। বর্তমানে আয়কর থেকে আদায় হয় সাড়ে ২৬ হাজার কোটি টাকা।

ওষুধ রফতানি বাড়ছে

বিশ্ববাজারে বাংলাদেশের ওষুধের চাহিদা বাড়ছে। এ কারণে প্রতি বছরই এ খাতে রফতানি আয় বাড়ছে। রফতানি হচ্ছে বিপুল পরিমাণ ওষুধ। দেশের ওষুধ শিল্পে মানসম্পন্ন ওষুধ প্রস্তুত, বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের তুলনায় দাম কম এবং আন্তর্জাতিক গ্রহণযোগ্যতার কারণে বাংলাদেশের ওষুধের চাহিদা বাড়ছে। এছাড়া ওষুধ রফতানির ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ উন্নত দেশগুলোতে ২০১৬ সাল পর্যন্ত বিশেষ সুবিধা পাচ্ছে।

রফতানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর তথ্য অনুযায়ী, বর্তমানে বিশ্বের প্রায় ৮৬টি দেশে বাংলাদেশের ওষুধ রফতানি হচ্ছে। দেশে ওষুধের কাঁচামাল উৎপাদনের জন্য ইতিমধ্যে উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়। আগামী এক বছরের মধ্যে পরিপূর্ণভাবে ওষুধ শিল্পের জন্য অ্যাকটিভ ফার্মাসিউটিক্যালস ইনস্টিটিউট বা এপিআই শিল্প পার্ক স্থাপন করা হচ্ছে। সংশ্লিষ্টরা মনে করছেন এই শিল্প পার্ক স্থাপন করা হলে আন্তর্জাতিক বাজারে দেশীয় ওষুধ শিল্প আরও বেশি রফতানি হবে। ইতিমধ্যে দেশে গণস্বাস্থ্য ফার্মাসিউটিক্যালস, স্কারার ফার্মাসহ আরও কয়েকটি প্রতিষ্ঠান সীমিত আকারে ওষুধের কাঁচামাল তৈরি শুরু করেছে।

রাসায়নিক পণ্যের আওতাভুক্ত ওষুধ রফতানি খাতে গত কয়েক বছরে সম্ভাব্যজনক প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে। ২০০৭-০৮ অর্ধবছরে ওষুধ রফতানির পরিমাণ ছিল ৪ কোটি ৩০ লাখ ডলার। ২০০৮-০৯ সালে তা বেড়েছে ৬ দশমিক ২১ শতাংশ। মোট ওষুধ রফতানি হয়েছিল ৪ কোটি ৫৬ লাখ ৭০ হাজার ডলারের। ২০০৬-০৭ অর্ধবছরে রফতানি হয় ১৯৪ কোটি ৩৭ লাখ ৬৬ হাজার টাকায়। ২০০৫-০৬ অর্ধবছরে রফতানি হয়েছিল ১৮৪ কোটি ৫৮ লাখ ৯৩ হাজার টাকার ওষুধ।

চলতি অর্ধবছরের ছয় মাসে রফতানি আয় আগের চেয়ে বেড়েছে ২০ দশমিক ৭০ শতাংশ। ছয় মাসের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ২ কোটি ৫৩ লাখ ৬০ হাজার ডলার। রফতানি হয়েছে ২ কোটি ২৮ লাখ ৬০ হাজার ডলার। গত অর্ধবছরের একই সময়ে রফতানির পরিমাণ ছিল ১ কোটি ৮৯ লাখ ৪০ হাজার ডলার। চলতি অর্ধবছরের ছয় মাসে রফতানি বাড়লেও লক্ষ্যমাত্রার তুলনায় কম হয়েছে ৯ দশমিক ৮৬ শতাংশ। চলতি অর্ধবছরের সার্বিক ওষুধ রফতানির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ৫ কোটি ২৫ লাখ ২০ হাজার। সংশ্লিষ্টরা মনে করছেন, এ বছর ওষুধ রফতানির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করা সম্ভব হবে।

গত অক্টোবরে রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি ছিল ১৮ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশ। লক্ষ্যমাত্রার তুলনায় রফতানি কম হয় ৭ দশমিক ৩৬ শতাংশ। রফতানির পরিমাণ ছিল ১ কোটি ৫৪ লাখ ৯০ হাজার ডলার। আগের বছরের একই সময় ছিল ১ কোটি ৩১ লাখ ২০ হাজার ডলার। ইপিবি'র তথ্য মতে, বাংলাদেশ থেকে যেসব দেশে ওষুধ রফতানি হচ্ছে সেগুলোর মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য হচ্ছে অস্ট্রিয়া, মিয়ানমার, জার্মানি, ব্রাজিল, শ্রীলংকা, পানামা, ডেনমার্ক, ব্রিটেন, নেদারল্যান্ডস, কেনিয়া, ইউক্রেন, স্পেন, নেপাল, ইন্দোনেশিয়া, ভিয়েতনাম, ফিলিপাইন, পাকিস্তান, ইয়েমেন, ফ্রান্স ও দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা। বাকি দেশগুলোতে রফতানির পরিমাণ এক শতাংশের নিচে। প্রতি বছরই নতুন নতুন দেশ রফতানি তালিকায় অন্তর্ভুক্ত হচ্ছে। মানসম্পন্ন ওষুধ বাজারজাতকরণের ফলেই রফতানি বাজারে সম্ভাবনা বাড়ছে বলে মনে করছেন সংশ্লিষ্টরা। ইন্টারন্যাশনাল মার্কেটিং সার্ভে (আইএমএস) ২০০৮ অনুযায়ী বর্তমানে দেশে প্রায় ২৫০টি ওষুধ শিল্পকারখানা রয়েছে। বাংলাদেশে ওষুধের বাজার প্রায় ২০ হাজার কোটি টাকার।

আইএমএসের রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী, বাংলাদেশের ওষুধ কোম্পানিগুলোর মধ্যে রফতানিতে শীর্ষ ১০ কোম্পানি হচ্ছে স্কারার, বেক্সিমকো, এসকায়েফ, ইনসেস্টা, একমি, অপসোনি, রেনাটা, এসিআই, এরিস্টোফার্মা ও ড্রাগ ইন্টারন্যাশনাল। রফতানি বাজারের ৭০ শতাংশ নিয়ন্ত্রণ করছে এই শীর্ষ ১০ কোম্পানি। এগুলোর মধ্যে ২০০৮ সালে প্রবৃদ্ধির দিক দিয়ে এগিয়ে আছে

ইসকায়ফ, রেনাটা, এসিআই ও ড্রাগ ইন্টারন্যাশনাল। ইপিবি'র পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী, ২০০১ সালে ওষুধ রফতানি হতো মাত্র ১৭টি দেশে। এরপর ২০০২ সালে ৩২টি দেশে, ২০০৩ সালে ৫১, ২০০৪ সালে ৬২, ২০০৫ সালে ৬৭, ২০০৮ সালে ৭১ এবং সর্বশেষ এ সংখ্যা পৌঁছেছে ৮৬টিতে।

ওষুধ প্রশাসন অধিদপ্তরের মহাপরিচালক মেজর জেনারেল আবুল কালাম আজাদ বলেন, বাংলাদেশের মানসম্মত ওষুধ দেশের চাহিদা মিটিয়ে বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশে রফতানি হচ্ছে। গার্মেন্ট খাতের পর ফার্মাসিউটিক্যাল ইন্ডাস্ট্রি শিগগিরই রফতানি আয়ের দ্বিতীয় খাতে পরিণত হবে। একইসঙ্গে রফতানির পরিমাণ দ্বিগুণ হবে।

এসএমই খাতে সর্বনিম্ন ঋণ সীমা ৫০ হাজার টাকা

দেশের প্রান্তিক ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তাদের ব্যাংক ঋণের সুবিধা দিতে ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্পের (এসএমই) সর্বনিম্ন ঋণ সীমা নামিয়ে আনল বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। এখন থেকে নারী-পুরুষ ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তারা এ খাতের পুনঃঅর্থায়ন প্রকল্প থেকে সর্বনিম্ন ৫০ হাজার টাকা ঋণ নিতে পারবেন। সম্প্রতি বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের এসএমই অ্যান্ড স্পেশাল প্রোগ্রামস বিভাগ থেকে একটি নির্দেশনা জারি করে সব ব্যাংক ও বার্ষিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রধান নির্বাহীর কাছে পাঠানো হয়েছে।

কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের নির্দেশনায় বলা হয়েছে, “দেশে সুসম শিল্প উন্নয়ন এবং ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্য সহজ শর্তে এবং আরও বেশি প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক ঋণ সুবিধা নিশ্চিত করতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ‘ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তা পুনঃঅর্থায়ন স্কিম’ চালু আছে। এ স্কিমের আওতায় এসএমই'র সর্বনিম্ন ঋণসীমা পুরুষ উদ্যোক্তা ২ লাখ টাকা ও নারী উদ্যোক্তা ১ লাখ টাকার পরিবর্তে ৫০ হাজার টাকা নির্ধারণ করা হলো।”

কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভাগের কর্মকর্তারা জানান, সম্প্রতি গভর্নর ড. আতিউর রহমানের সিলেট সফরকালে মহিলা উদ্যোক্তাদের দাবির পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে সর্বনিম্ন ঋণ সীমা এক লাখ টাকা থেকে নামিয়ে আনার দাবি জানানো হয়েছিল। নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়, ক্ষুদ্র নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের ব্যবসা পরিচালনার জন্য ১ লাখ টাকার প্রয়োজন হয় না। অনেকেরই ২০ থেকে ৫০ হাজার টাকার ঋণ সুবিধা পেলেই চলে। এক্ষেত্রে ১ লাখ টাকার নিচে এসএমই খাতে নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের ঋণ দেওয়ার বিধান না থাকায় ব্যাংক ঋণ থেকে ক্ষুদ্র নারী উদ্যোক্তারা সুবিধামতো ঋণ নিতে পারছেন না। দেশের নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের এ দাবির পরিপ্রেক্ষিতেই ক্ষুদ্র নারী ও পুরুষ উদ্যোক্তাদের ঋণের সর্বনিম্ন সীমা ১ লাখ টাকা থেকে কমিয়ে ৫০ হাজার টাকা নির্ধারণ করা হয়। আশা করা হচ্ছে ঋণসীমা কমিয়ে আনার ফলে প্রান্তিক পর্যায়ের নতুন ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তা সৃষ্টি সম্ভব হবে। যার মাধ্যমে দেশে সুসম শিল্প উন্নয়ন ঘটানো সম্ভব বলে মনে করছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

২৫ জেলায় শিল্পনগরীর আওতা বাড়ছে

ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্পের বিকাশে দেশের ২৫ জেলার শিল্পনগরীর আওতা বাড়ানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে বাংলাদেশ ক্ষুদ্র ও কৃষ্টি শিল্প করপোরেশন (বিসিক)। ওইসব জেলার শিল্পনগরীতে অধিকাংশ প্লট খালি পড়ে আছে। সরকারের শিল্পায়ন ও এসএমই খাতের বিকাশে নতুন পরিকল্পনা অনুযায়ী এসব শিল্পনগরীকে আরও সম্প্রসারণের পরিকল্পনা নেওয়া হয়েছে। আশা করা হচ্ছে, কর্মসংস্থান বাড়তে এ উদ্যোগ কাজে লাগবে। এজন্য ধরা হয়েছে ১৩৪ কোটি ৪৩ লাখ ৩০ হাজার টাকা।

যেসব স্থানের শিল্পনগরীকে সম্প্রসারণের উদ্যোগ হয়েছে সেগুলোর মধ্যে ঢাকা বিভাগে ১০, চট্টগ্রাম বিভাগে ৩, রাজশাহী বিভাগে ৮, খুলনায় ৩ এবং সিলেটে ১টি। ঢাকা বিভাগের শিল্প এলাকাগুলো হচ্ছে নারায়ণগঞ্জের সোনারগাঁ, গাজীপুরের জয়দেবপুর, টাঙ্গাইল, সদর, নরসিংদীর শিবপুর, মানিকগঞ্জ সদর, ময়মনসিংহের মুক্তাগাছা, রাজবাড়ী সদর, গোপালগঞ্জ,

ফরিদপুর সদর ও মুন্সীগঞ্জের সিরাজদিখান। চট্টগ্রাম বিভাগের শিল্প নগরীগুলো হচ্ছে কুমিল্লা সদর, পটিয়া ও ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া। রাজশাহীর পাবনা, বগুড়া সদর, রংপুর সদর, সৈয়দপুর সদর, সিরাজগঞ্জ, দিনাজপুর, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ ও রাজশাহী সদর। খুলনা বিভাগের কুষ্টিয়া, যশোর সদর ও বাগেরহাট। আর সিলেটের খাদিমনগরের বিসিক শিল্পনগরী।

শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্র জানায়, প্লট উন্নয়ন, অভ্যন্তরীণ সড়ক নির্মাণ ড্রেনেজ, বিদ্যুৎ, পানি, গ্যাসসহ অন্যান্য অবকাঠামো উন্নয়ন করা হবে। উদ্যোক্তাদের ব্যাপক চাহিদার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে এবং ক্ষুদ্র শিল্পের বিকাশের মাধ্যমে দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন, নতুন কর্মসংস্থান সৃষ্টির জন্য এ পরিকল্পনা নেওয়া হয়েছে। এজন্য ‘এক্সটেনশন অব বিসিক ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয়াল এস্টেটস’ নামে প্রকল্পের কাজ শুরু হয়েছে, কিন্তু বাস্তবতা হচ্ছে, এর কোনোটাই বর্তমানে এসব প্লটের ব্যবহার করতে পারছে না।

দেশে বর্তমানে ৭৪টি বিসিক শিল্পনগরী রয়েছে। এগুলোর মধ্যে প্লটের সংখ্যা ১০ হাজার ১০৯। ইতিমধ্যে বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে ৮ হাজার ৭০১ এবং এগুলোতে শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠান রয়েছে ৩ হাজার ৪৯৮টি। বিনিয়োগের পরিমাণ ৮ হাজার ৮৯ কোটি ৯১ লাখ টাকা। প্রতি বছর উৎপাদন ক্ষমতা ১৫ হাজার ১৩০ কোটি ৬৬ লাখ টাকা। প্রায় ৩ লাখ মানুষ এসব শিল্পনগরীতে কর্মসংস্থানের সুযোগ পেয়েছে। গত ২০০৭-০৮ অর্থবছরে বিসিক শিল্পনগরী থেকে সরকারের রাজস্ব আয়ের পরিমাণ ছিল ১ হাজার ৪৮৩ কোটি টাকা।

রাজবাড়িয়া বিসিক শিল্পনগরীতে ১৩৭টি শিল্প প্লটের মধ্যে সবটির বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে। এর মধ্যে উৎপাদনে আছে ৪৮টি। কুষ্টিয়ায় ১৫৫টি প্লটের মধ্যে ১৪৯টি বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে। তবে উৎপাদনে আছে ১২৪টি। রুগ্ন হয়ে গেছে ১১টি। সতিয়ায় ৭৯টি প্লটের মধ্যে ৭৬টি বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে। উৎপাদন চালু আছে মাত্র ১৮টির। ফরিদপুরে ১০৬টি প্লটের মধ্যে সবই বরাদ্দ হলেও উৎপাদনে আছে মাত্র ৩০টি। জয়দেবপুরে ২৬৩টি প্লটের মধ্যে সব বরাদ্দ হয়েছে এবং উৎপাদনে আছে ১৩৫টি। মানিকগঞ্জের বিসিকের ৭১টি প্লটের মধ্যে ৬৯টি বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে। উৎপাদন চালু আছে ২৪টির। মুন্সীগঞ্জের ৮২টি প্লটের মধ্যে সব বরাদ্দ হয়েছে। উৎপাদন চালু ৪৭টিতে। নারায়ণগঞ্জে ১৩৬টির মধ্যে সব বরাদ্দ হলেও উৎপাদন প্রক্রিয়ায় আছে মাত্র ৯৪টি। নরসিংদীতে ৯৫টি প্লটের সব বরাদ্দ হলেও উৎপাদন শুরু করেছে মাত্র ৩১টি। টাঙ্গাইল বিসিকে ১৩২টির মধ্যে সবই বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে, কিন্তু উৎপাদনে যেতে পেরেছে মাত্র ৫২টি। রাজবাড়ীতে ৭৭টি প্লট বরাদ্দ হয়েছে, কিন্তু উৎপাদন চালু আছে ৩২টিতে। কুষ্টিয়ার ৮৬টি প্লটের মধ্যে ৮১টি বরাদ্দ হয়েছে। মাত্র ১৪টিতে উৎপাদন শুরু করেছে। যশোরে ৩০২টি প্রতিষ্ঠানের মধ্যে ২৮৮টি বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে। ১১৮টি প্রতিষ্ঠান উৎপাদন কাজ শুরু করতে পেরেছে। বাগেরহাটে ১১১টি প্লটের ১০৯টি বরাদ্দ হয়েছে। এর মধ্যে ৪০টির উৎপাদন কাজ চালু হয়েছে। সিলেটের খাদিমনগরে ১৩৭টি প্লটের মধ্যে ১৩৪টি বরাদ্দ দেওয়া হয়েছে। ৬০টি উৎপাদন কাজ চালু করতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। পাবনায় ৪৩৬টি প্লটের মধ্যে ৪৩৪টি বরাদ্দ হলেও মাত্র ১৪৩টিতে উৎপাদন চালু আছে। রাজশাহীতে ৩২৯টি প্লটের মধ্যে ৩২৫টির বরাদ্দ হয়েছে। আর ১৮৬টিতে উৎপাদন কাজ চলছে। সৈয়দপুরে ৯০টি প্লট বরাদ্দ শেষ। উৎপাদনে যেতে পেরেছে মাত্র ৫১টি। বগুড়ায় ৭৯টির মধ্যে ৭৬টি প্লট বরাদ্দ হয়েছে। উৎপাদনে আছে ৩১টি এবং রংপুরে ৮৩টির মধ্যে একটি ছাড়া সব বরাদ্দ হয়েছে, কিন্তু উৎপাদনে যেতে পেরেছে মাত্র ২৩টি।

Share Market Intelligence (as on 28 February 2010)

Top 10 Turnover Leaders

Dhaka Stock Exchange			Chittagong Stock Exchange		
Company	Volume (Shares)	Turnover ('000 Tk.)	Company	Volume (Shares)	Turnover ('000 Tk.)
BEXIMCO Ltd.	2,537,814	970,688.48	BEXIMCO Ltd.	299,103	114,533.46
Lankabangla Finance	1,543,033	637,581.24	Grameen Phone	200,000	74,588.00
Grameen Phone	1,501,000	560,083.14	Bex Tex	687,318	67,962.00
Bex Tex	4,814,891	475,518.64	AB Bank Ltd.	40,004	49,156.92
South East Bank	824,249	375,700.94	South East Bank	90,755	41,122.91
AB Bank Ltd.	221,019	271,017.92	Grameen M. F. One	283,000	31,885.61
Navana CNG Ltd.	871,200	228,750.98	Navana CNG Ltd.	98,100	25,749.29
Maksons Spining Ltd.	1,886,600	206,771.36	Padma Oil Co.	35,800	24,697.70
Square Pharma	56,445	201,536.31	Shinepukur Ceramics	244,060	22,436.44
Padma Oil Co.	267,202	183,867.04	Golden Son Ltd.	313,450	22,339.58

Top 10 Market Capitals

Dhaka Stock Exchange			Chittagong Stock Exchange		
Company	Mkt. Cap (M. Tk.)	% of Total (Mkt. Cap.)	Company	Mkt. Cap (M. Tk.)	% of Total (Mkt. Cap.)
Grameen Phone	503,851	26.21	Grameen Phone	503,581	27.14
ICB	63,751	3.32	ICB	60,505	3.26
Titas Gas Trans.	59,558	3.10	Titas Gas Trans.	59,487	3.21
Square Pharma	43,104	2.24	Square Pharma	43,202	2.33
Islami Bank Ltd.	39,354	2.05	Islami Bank Ltd.	39,353	2.12
BEXIMCO Ltd.	36,045	1.88	BEXIMCO Ltd.	36,092	1.95
BATBC	32,132	1.67	BATBC	32,095	1.73
AB Bank Ltd.	31,443	1.64	AB Bank Ltd.	31,510	1.70
Summit Power Ltd.	29,984	1.56	Summit Power Ltd.	29,974	1.62
Power Grid Co.	28,003	1.46	Power Grid Co.	28,029	1.51

Exchange Rates (as on 28 February 2010)

Selling BC selling	Currency	Buying TT buying
69.65	USD	68.65
95.25	EUR	91.11
108.35	POU	104.02
63.60	AUD	59.62
0.80	JPY	0.75
65.28	SWF	62.41
9.88	SEK	9.22
67.20	CAD	64.27
8.99	HKD	8.82
50.55	SGD	48.45
19.07	UAD	18.59
18.67	SAR	18.21
13.13	DAK	12.25
237.42	KUD	233.98

EXCHANGE RATES OF SOME ASIAN CURRENCIES AGAINST US DOLLAR

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Lankan Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringit
46.39	85.85	114.31	33.04	3.41

Sources : The Independent and The Daily Star

TRADE INFORMATION

Prepared by DCCI Research Cell

No. 02

February – 2010

The following **Trade Inquiries** have been received in the Chamber from different sources abroad. Interested member-firms may like to contact them directly without any obligation on the part of DCCI.

FOREIGN EXPORTERS

FULL GREEN SOLAR RECH CORP. LTD.

Add: 11f, Guohua Building B, No. 2
Minjiang Road, Qingdao
China 266071.
Tel: +86-532-85936922/67
Fax : +86-532-85936969/55
E-mail: xiaying@fullgreensolar.com
Website : www.fullgreensolar.com
http://fullgreensolar.manufacturer.globalsources.com

Items: Solar energy photo thermal and solar power project.

FAIRS & EXHIBITIONS

BEIJING INTERNATIONAL TOURISM EXPO 2010

Date : 25-27 June, 2010
Venue : China International Exhibition Centre (CIEC)
Beijing, China
Organizer : Beijing Tourism Administration (BTA)

Contact :
Conference & Exhibition Management Services Pte Ltd.
(CEMS)

1 Maritime Square, #09-43 Harbour Front Centre
Singapore 099253.
Tel: (65) 6278 8666, Fax : (65) 6278 4077
E-mail: jason@cems.com.sg, Website : www.bitechina.com.cn
Attn: Mr. Jason Sim

INDOORS FURNITURE AND DECORATION EXHIBITION

Date : 7-11 April, 2010
Organizer : Pyramids Advertising Agency, Egypt
Tel: +2(02) 26873400
Fax : +2(02) 24051618
E-mail: paa@ahram.org.eg

INTER OFFICE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

Date : 14-16 April, 2010
Organizer : Middle East Trade Fairs, Egypt
Tel. & Fax : +2(02) 37612758 - 37617898
E-mail: info@mtf-fairs.com

REAL ESTATE AND VILLAS EXHIBITION

Date : 28 April – 1 May, 2010
Organizer : ACG-ITF
Tel: +2(02) 27538401
E-mail: info@ACE_ITF.com
Website : www.acg-itf.com

THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION FOR GLASS PRODUCTS TECHNOLOGY

Date : 5-7 May, 2010
Organizer : Nile Trade Fair, Egypt
Tel: +2(02) 22737495/26712287
Fax : +2(02) 26712287
E-mail: info@nilefairs.lcom
Website : www.glassworldex.com

EGYMEDICA EXHIBITION

Date : 5-7 May, 2010
Organizer : Green Land Co. for Exhibition
Tel. & Fax : +2(02) 25774537 - 25784581
E-mail: greenland@egymedica.com
Website : imageegypt.com

PLASTEX7 EXHIBITION

Date : 13-16 May, 2010
Organizer : ACG-ITF
Tel: +2(02) 27538401, Fax : +2(02) 2753832
E-mail: info@ACE_ITF.com
Website : www.acg-itf.com

LANDSCAPE GARDENS ENGINEERING INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

Date : 17-19 May, 2010
Organizer : EXPO CO
Tel: +2(02) 33464216-33447980
Fax : +2(02) 33471155
E-mail: info@saharaexpo.com
Website : www.egymedica.com

FHA2010

Website : www.foodnhotelasia.com

WINE & SPIRITS ASIA 2010

Website : www.winespiritsasia.com
Date : 20-23 April, 2010

BROADCAST ASIA 2010

Website : www.Broadcast-Asia.com

COMMUNIC ASIA 2010

Website : www.CommunicAsia.com

ENTERPRISE IT 2010

INTERACTIVE DME
Date : 15-18 June, 2010
Venue : Singapore Expo, Singapore

MTA MALAYSIA 2010

Website : www.mtamalaysia.com
Date : 5-9 May, 2010
Venue : Putra World Trade Centre
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

MTA VIETNAM 2010

Website : www.mtavietnam.com
Date : 6-9 July, 2010
Venue : Saigon Exhibition & Convention Centre
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Organizer : Singapore Exhibition Services Pte Ltd.
No. 1 Jalan Kilang Timor
#09-02 Pacific Tech Centre, Singapore 159303.
Tel. +65 6233 6638, Fax : +65 6233 6633
E-mail: events@sesallworld.com
Website : iwww.sesallworld.com



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DCCI BUSINESS INSTITUTE
 A Centre for Entrepreneurial Excellence

DBI Training Courses / Workshop in March & April, 2010

1	Human Resource Development (HRD) (02.30 p.m.- 06.00 p.m.) 5 half days	March 20-24, 2010
2	Project Management (02.30 p.m.-06.00 p.m.) 3 half days	March 29-31, 2010 <small>(Pre-learned class)</small>
3	Workshop on Managing Logistics and Transportation (10.00 a.m. - 06.00 p.m.) day-long	March 19, 2010
4	How to Establish a New Business (2.30 p.m.- 06.00 p.m.)	April 3-7, 2010
5	Basel II-Risk based Capital Adequacy for Banks (2.30 p.m.- 06.00 p.m.)	April 11-13, 2010
6	Shipping Procedures for Export & Import (2.30 p.m.- 06.00 p.m.)	April 24-28, 2010

Fees : For Course 2 & 5 : DCCI Member Tk. 2,500/- & Non-Member Tk. 3,000/-.
 For Course 1,4 & 6 : DCCI Member Tk. 3,000/- & Non-Member Tk. 3,500/-.
 For Course 3 : Day-long Workshop: Tk 2,000/-.
 Payable by Cash / Pay-order or DD in favor of "Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry".

Discount : 10% for 3 & more participants from one organization for each course / workshop.

Registration Dead line : At least two-working days before the starting of each course / workshop.

For Registration, Please contact :

DBI, Dhaka Chamber Bhaban (11th Floor), 65-66, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
 Tel: 9552562 (Hunting) Ext. 137/147/124/281/123, Mobile : 01716518565 & 01914569576, Fax: 9560830, E-mail: dbi@dhakachamber.com, Website: www.dhakachamber.com/dbi

**Seats are limited
 First come First served**



ICC Bangladesh
The world business organization

ICC-Bangladesh organizes Conference
 on
Energy for Growth

on
 April 13, 2010
 at
 Radisson Water Garden Hotel
 Dhaka, Bangladesh

Registration Fee: BDT 7,000/ (US \$100.00)
 Last date for Registration: March 20, 2010



DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (third from right) speaking at the discussion meeting of Coordinating Directors, Convenors and Co-convenors of DCCI Standing Committees at DCCI on February 25. DCCI former Director Anwar Hossain (fourth from left), Senior Vice President M Shahjahan Khan (second from right), Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (right), Past Presidents ATM Waziullah (third from left), ASM Quasem (second from left) and Benajir Ahmed (left) are also seen.

DCCI Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (second from right) receiving crest from Commerce Minister Muhammad Faruk Khan (second from left) at the concluding ceremony of Dhaka International Trade Fair 2010 on February 7. FBCCI President Annisul Huq (right) is also seen.



DCCI Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (second from right), Directors R I Khan, FCA (second from left), Mahabub Anam (third from left) and other DCCI officials placing wreath at the National Shaheed Minar on the occasion of International Mother Language Day 2010.



DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (left) exchanging views with Siou Chew Kuek (centre) from Policy Division of Global ICT Department of The World Bank at DCCI on February 7. DCCI Director T.I.M.Nurul Kabir (right) is also seen in the picture.

DCCI Director and chief guest Mahabub Anam (second from left), Executive Director, DBI Md. Hossain Ali (left), Resource Person and DGM, Supply Chain Manager, Navena Group Md. Mizanur Rahman (second from right), and Md. Shamsuddin Azad, Deputy Secretary and Course Coordinator (right) are seen with the participants in the certificate-giving ceremony of 'Effective Negotiation Skills' training course, organized by the DCCI Business Institute (DBI) on February 24 at the Institute's premises.



A nine-member delegation from Belfast Royal Academy, Ireland visited DCCI on February 8. DCCI Secretary AHM Nurul Islam (fourth from left) and Additional Secretary (R&P) Ferdous Ara Begum (left) are seen with the delegation members.



Team leader of City Region Development Project of Asian Development Bank Keith Perry and Institutional Development/ Municipal Management Specialist Ian Munt called on DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (fifth from left) at DCCI on February 7.

The DCCI President presenting publication set to Director of GTZ Dr. Dietrich Stotz (fourth from left) at Westin Hotel, Dhaka on February 3. Secretary AHM Nurul Islam (right) and Additional Secretary (R&P) Ferdaus Ara Begum (second from right) are also seen.



Managing Director & CEO of Wariid Telecom International Limited Chris Tobit (left) called on DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (right) at DCCI on February 15.

DCCI Picnic-2010 in Pictures

5 February 2010 at Jibanta Shorgo Picnic Spot



Commercial History Of Dhaka



Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry

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