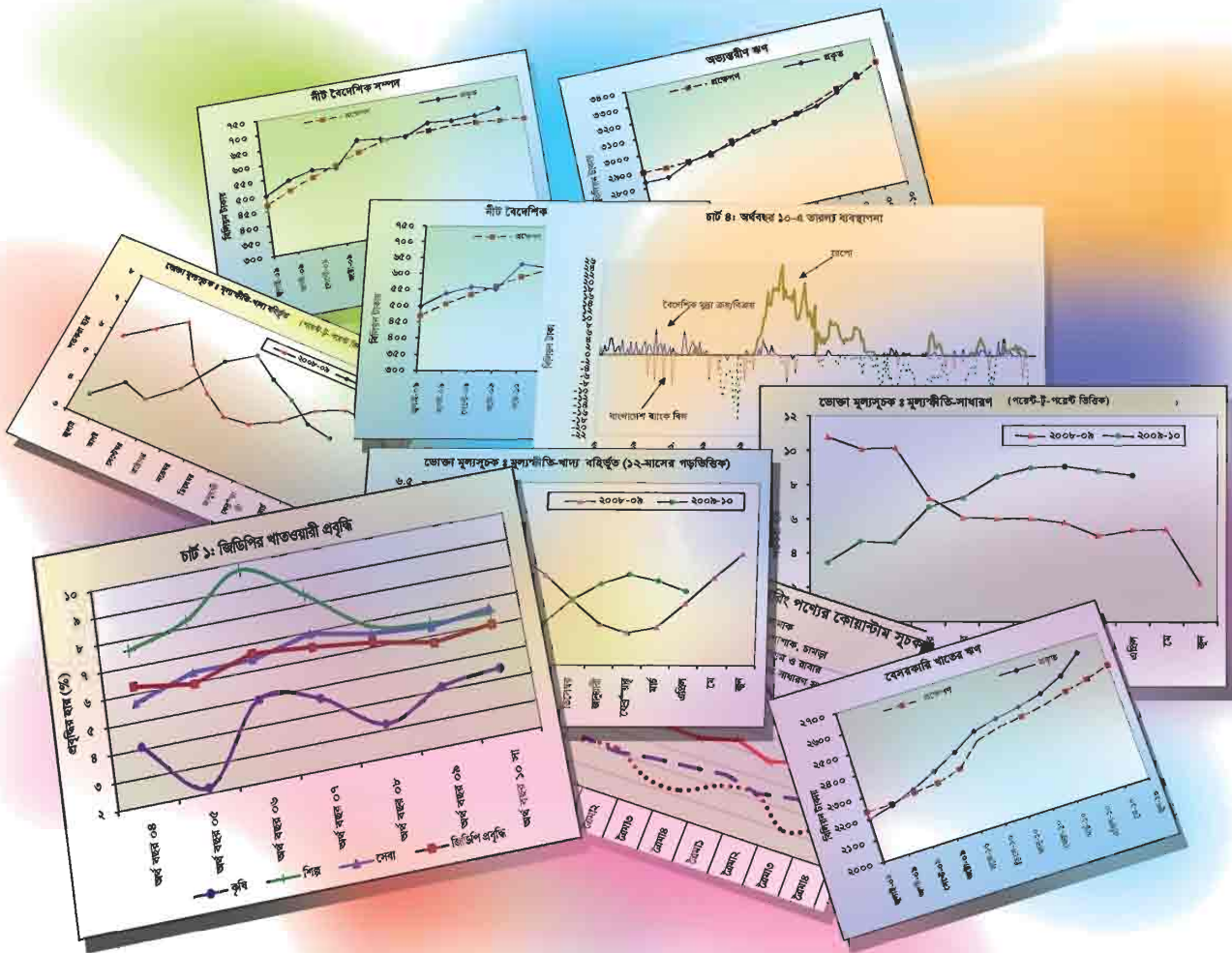


DCCI REVIEW

Monetary policy and our economy



ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি
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REVIEW

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Monetary policy and our economy

Monetary policy is the process by which the central bank or monetary authority of a country controls the supply of money, often targeting a rate of interest. Monetary policy is usually used to attain a set of objectives oriented towards the growth and stability of the economy. These goals include stable prices and low unemployment. Monetary policy is referred to as either being an expansionary policy, or a contractionary policy, where an expansionary policy increases the total supply of money in the economy rapidly, and a contractionary policy decreases the total money supply or increases it only slowly. Expansionary policy is traditionally used to combat unemployment in a recession by lowering interest rates, while contractionary policy involves raising interest rates to combat inflation. Monetary policy is contrasted with fiscal policy, which refers to government borrowing, spending and taxation.

A policy is referred to as contractionary if it reduces the size of the money supply or increases it only slowly, or if it raises the interest rate. An expansionary policy increases the size of the money supply more rapidly, or decreases the interest rate. Furthermore, monetary policies are described as follows: accommodative, if the interest rate set by the central monetary authority is intended to create economic growth; neutral, if it is intended neither to create growth nor combat inflation; or tight if intended to reduce inflation.

DCCI welcomes the new monetary policy announced by the Bangladesh Bank Governor as it aims at blocking flow of credit to unproductive sectors. But then the central bank needs to clearly identify the sectors it describes as unproductive. For instance, squeeze on credit flow to real estate sector would dislodge from their jobs hundreds of thousands involved in it and shut down many allied industries that grew with it.

The chamber is worried over the new monetary policy's reduced target for private sector growth rate at 16 percent for June 2011. This was 21.1 percent in June this year. However, an increased credit growth target for the public sector for next June has been set at 25.3 percent. It was 9.4 percent in June this year. In a bid to contain inflation, reserve money growth target has been set at 13 percent for the next June,

while it was 17.1 percent this June. DCCI feels, without increased money flow to the private sector, faster economic growth is simply unthinkable at a time when the public sector is in a state of flux due to various reasons. Doing away with tenders for projects costing up to 20 million taka will cause bleeding of public sector investment.

DCCI is at a loss as to how upward revision of gas, fuel oil and electricity, as suggested by the Governor, will contribute to taming of inflation. Any more hike in these rates without ensuring its steady supply will further sap the vitality of the private sector as an engine of economic growth. Inflation had been low till June last year, but from July last year it continued to rise. Though inflation fell slightly in the recent months, experts think it may go up again. The new monetary policy continued its dual objectives of easing inflationary pressure and supporting the economic growth, but left rates unchanged. It emphasised keeping the price level stable but the Bangladesh Bank ought to have explained how it could be done.

Monetary policy could have been oriented more towards private sector investment. Cost of money is not the only hurdle that is impeding investment in Bangladesh. There are many other equally or more difficult hurdles like shortage of power and other infrastructure, poor law and order, extortion, tender tempering, bureaucratic corruption and harassment, political interference, etc. Added to all these are the terrible traffic jams in Dhaka, the unplanned development of the capital, the shining shopping malls, and so many other things. We would also like to draw the authorities' attention to the reality that there is a limit to which we can increase our exports in a highly competitive market and unless domestic demand increases, investments would be risky. But domestic demand depends mainly on disposable incomes of the people. The way incomes of millions have been cut will hurt domestic demand greatly.

DCCI appreciates the way the small and medium enterprises have received attention in the monetary policy. We hope, the SMEs, which employ more people than any other sector of the economy, should get easy credit for their further development. We expect the central bank to hold regular consultations with chambers to frame effective guidelines for growth of SMEs in Bangladesh.

DCCI President's call to revise National Tourism Policy

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan has urged the government to revise National Tourism Policy formulated in 1992 in order to develop prospective tourism sector.



Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ghulam Muhammed Quader (third from right) addressing as chief guest at a seminar on Civil Aviation and Tourism: Prospects and Challenges at DCCI on July 18. DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (third from left), Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh Air Commodore Mahmud Hussain, ndc, psc (second from left), Senior Vice President M Shahjahan Khan (second from right), Director Mahabub Anam (left) and CEO of HG Aviation Ltd. Imran Asif (right) are also seen in the picture.

He also proposed for activating the National Tourism Council, forming National Tourism Board, developing Infrastructure and increasing budget allocation for this thrust sector. The DCCI President underscored the importance of branding Bangladesh with proper logo and slogan.

Abul Kjasem Khan made the proposals at a seminar organized by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) on "Civil Aviation and Tourism: Prospects and Challenges" at DCCI on July 18.

Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ghulam Muhammed Quader was present as chief guest and Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh Air Commodore Mahmud Hussain, ndc, psc was present as special guest at the seminar.

The DCCI President said, tourism sector of Bangladesh could play an important role in economic development and GDP growth of the country. He also stressed on modernization of Bangladesh Biman to attract tourists to visit Bangladesh.

Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ghulam Muhammed Quader thanked DCCI for organizing such an event at DCCI. He stressed on enhancing the capability of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. He also sought cooperation of all to remove barriers to this potential sector.

Quader said, said the present government is promoting private airlines to come forward and invest in Bangladesh. The present government gives importance on providing safety and security to the tourists visiting Bangladesh, he informed. He also said that an airport of international standard will be made at Cox's Bazar within two years. He said that the government will make reserved areas for tourism where every tourism facility will be available. He said that shares of Biman will be available in the stock market soon.

Air Commodore Mahmud Hussain said that to compete in the international tourism market, we have to establish technology and knowledge-based aviation institute.

Chief Executive Officer of H G Aviation Limited Imran Asif presented the keynote paper on the subject. Discussants from different organizations took part in

the open discussion session.

Senior Vice President of DCCI M Shahjahan Khan gave vote of thanks. DCCI Directors Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA, Major (retired) Md. Yead Ali Fakir, M. Bashir Ullah Bhuiyan, T. I. M. Nurul Kabir, Mahabub Anam, Waqar Ahmad Choudhury, Al-haj Md. Nasiruddin Khan, M. Anwarul Haque and DCCI Past President R Maksud Khan were also present on the occasion.

Call to gather knowledge on import and indenting

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

He said, import constitutes an important part of trade, commerce and industry. Rather than maintaining a marketing department, many producers engage marketing agents and indenting houses for marketing their products in foreign markets under the present system of market economy, he said.

Mahabub Anam said, an indenting house can contact different private importers to know about their present and future requirements and to meet their demand, contact suitable foreign suppliers/ exporters to obtain goods and services at most competitive price. Importers and indenting houses can thus play an important role in procurement of quality goods, machineries and raw materials from abroad for rapid industrialization and development of our economy, he said.

He was speaking at a certificate-giving ceremony of a training course on "Import and Indenting Procedures" on July 14, 2010 as chief guest.

On behalf of the participants, a representative expressed his satisfaction that he could get adequate knowledge of import and indenting procedures from the task-based excellent course, delivered through various

attractive training methods. He said, these would help them do their jobs more efficiently and fruitfully.

Executive Director, DBI Md. Hossain Ali said, their learning will be effective only if they apply their acquired knowledge 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 training courses/workshops and Certificate/Diploma courses on Supply Chain Management in DBI Training Calendar, 2010 and invited them to take part in suitable courses.

Md. Shamsuddin Azad, Deputy Secretary (Training) coordinated the session. A total number of 26 participants from prominent business organizations as well as individuals participated in the course. At the end, certificates were distributed among the participants by the chief guest.

Discussion meeting on problems of businessmen of old Dhaka

Dhaka Chamber of commerce and Industry (DCCI) organized a discussion meeting on "Problems of Businessmen of Old Dhaka" at DCCI on July 29.

Minister of Industries, GoB Dilip Barua was present as chief guest. Member of parliament Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, former Member of Parliament and Chairman of Anwar Group of Industries Al-haj Anwar Hossain were also present as special guest.

Former Minister of Industries and Commerce and Past President of DCCI, FBCCI M. A. Sattar moderated the discussion.

The DCCI President said, in the national economy of Bangladesh the contribution of old Dhaka is very important. Various products of this area are being used every day in industries as raw materials. He also emphasized on taking short, medium and long term measures for the sustenance and development of small and medium enterprises of this area.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua said, the present government is committed to rapid industrialization of Bangladesh and this will create huge employment opportunities. Regarding Nimtoli incident, he

said, we have to be careful so that such disaster may not occur in the future. He also stressed on developing social responsibility among the people to face such crises. He said that the present government is working hard to relocate the plastic industry of Old Dhaka to Keraniganj.

Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin stressed on the development of roads and other infrastructure of Old Dhaka. He assured all cooperation in getting Fire License for businessmen.



Minister of Industries Dilip Barua (third from left) speaking at a discussion meeting on "Problems of Businessmen of Old Dhaka" at DCCI on July 29. DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (centre), Member of Parliament Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin (third from right), former Member of Parliament and Chairman of Anwar Group of Industries Al-haj Anwar Hossain (second from left), former Minister of Industries and Commerce and Past President of DCCI, FBCCI M. A. Sattar (second from right), DCCI Senior Vice President M Shahjahan Khan (left) and Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (right) are seen in the picture.

Al-haj Anwar Hossain called upon the government to help the families who have lost their belongings and lives at the Nimtoli fire accident.

People from different organizations of Old Dhaka city took part in the open discussion session.

Senior Vice President of DCCI M Shahjahan Khan gave vote of thanks.

DCCI Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik, Directors Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA, Major Md. Yead Ali Fakir (Retd.), M. Bashir Ullah Bhuiyan, T. I. M. Nurul Kabir, Mahabub Anam, Nessar Maksud Khan, Al-haj Md. Nasiruddin Khan, M. Anwarul Haque, Asif Ibrahim, K. G. Karim, Md. Sirajul Islam (Bulbul), M. S. Shekil Chowdhury, Nasir Hossain, Past Presidents A. Rob Chowdhury, R. Maksud Khan and Hossain Khaled were also present during the discussion meeting.

Orientation on modular learning in supply chain management

DCCI Business Institute (DBI) organized an orientation-cum-certificate awarding ceremony at DCCI on July 24. Minister of Industries Dilip Barua was present as the chief guest and he handed over the certificates among the participants.

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan in his address of welcome said that DCCI Business Institute (DBI) was established with the assistance of International Trade Centre (ITC), Geneva in 1991. He said, DBI conducts specialised need-based training courses at the request of various ministries, business organizations and development partners.

Minister of Industries Dilip Barua said that supply chain management system can play a vital role in becoming competitive and face the challenges of globalization for the developing countries. He also said, this course seems complementary to the Public Procurement Regulations (PPR), 2003 formulated by the government of Bangladesh. He called upon both the private and public sectors to work together to develop need-based human resources development programmes to accelerate the pace of industrialization in the country. He said, this kind of courses will help coordinating purchasing, logistic and inventory management to cut cost and increase profit and customer satisfaction.

Executive Director of DCCI Business Institute (DBI) Md. Hossain Ali gave a power point presentation on Modular Learning System in Supply Chain Management^(P).

DCCI Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik gave vote of thanks. DCCI Directors Major Md. Yead Ali Fakir (Retd.) M. Bashir Ullah Bhuiyan, Al-haj Md. Nasiruddin Khan, M. Anwarul Haque and Past President M H Rahman were present at the event.



Industries Minister Dilip Barua (seated second from left) and DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (seated second from right) are seen along with the participants of Modular Learning System in Supply Chain Management training course of DCCI Business Institute (DBI) at DCCI on July 24. DCCI Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (left) is also seen in the picture.

Abul Kasem Khan said, to meet the emerging requirements of the business community to help them face the challenges of globalization with up-to-date modern knowledge, DBI conducts training courses for entrepreneurial development. About 1000 persons are currently being trained at DBI every year, he added.

SMEs hit hard by VAT

DCCI Director Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA said VAT has been introduced in Bangladesh within a short time. This has resulted in complicated accounting and financial difficulties for many business organizations, specially SMEs.

Rafiqul Islam Khan said, evasion of tax is a crime, but calculation of taxes properly and exemption of taxes as per rules and regulations are necessary to become competitive. For this, first hand knowledge of different rules and regulations of VAT and Income Tax and preparation of a Tax Plan are necessary for a business.

DCCI established DBI to conduct such need-based training courses, he added advising the participants to avail the facilities of these effective courses to become successful in their career and businesses.



Director of DCCI and chief guest Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA (third from right), Executive Director, DBI Md. Hossain Ali (second from right), Resource Person and First Secretary (Tax Policy), NBR, Dhaka Md. Abdul Latif (third from left) and Deputy Secretary and Course Coordinator Md. Shamsuddin Azad (second from left) are seen along with the participants in the certificate-giving ceremony of 'Rules & Procedures of Value Added Tax (VAT) & Income Tax' training course organized by the DCCI Business Institute (DBI) on July 29 at the Institute's premises.

Rafiqul Islam Khan made the observation while he was attending a certificate-giving ceremony of the training

course on "Rules and Procedures of Value Added Tax (VAT) and Income Tax" on July 29 as chief guest.

On behalf of the participants, a representative expressed his satisfaction in getting very useful knowledge of VAT and Income Tax from the task-based excellent course. The acquired knowledge from very good resource persons, delivered through various attractive training methods, filled up the gaps in their knowledge and help them doing their job more efficiently and confidently.

Executive Director, DBI Md. Hossain Ali said, their learning will be fruitful only if they apply their acquired knowledge in their day-to-day activities. He assured that their pertinent recommendations would be duly considered to make the module more effective in future.

Md. Shamsuddin Azad, Deputy Secretary (Training) coordinated the session.

A total number of 38 participants, some from prominent business organizations participated in the course. At the end, certificates were distributed among the participants by the chief guest.

DCCI and Vision Entertainment sign agreement to televise TV Talk Show

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) and Vision Entertainment signed an agreement on July 31.

DCCI Secretary AHM Nurul Islam and Managing Director of Vision Entertainment Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations.

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan, Senior Vice President M Shahjahan Khan and Programme Manager of Channel-I Shahidul Alam Sachchu were present during the agreement signing ceremony.

Under this agreement, DCCI and Vision Entertainment will jointly make Television Talk Show programme of 52 episodes titled 'DCCI Business Dialogue'. The programme will be telecast on two private TV channels soon. Wide publicity of this programme will create public opinion on important issues of business interest of Bangladesh.

Besides, advocacy on the government's development strategy and policy, the programme is expected to contribute towards economic development of the country.



Secretary of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry AHM Nurul Islam (left) and Managing Director of Vision Entertainment Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury (second from right) signed an agreement to televise TV Talk Show of 52 episodes titled 'DCCI Business Dialogue' at DCCI on July 31. DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (second from left), Senior Vice President M Shahjahan Khan (third from left) and Programme Manager of Channel- I Shahidul Alam Sachchu (third from right) are also seen in the picture.

Apparel workers to get Tk 3,000 at entry point

The government has announced a revised wage structure, unanimously recommended by the tripartite Minimum Wage Board, for the apparel industry workers.

The workers, however, have to wait at least for three months to get the new wages as the employers took the time while signing the wage agreement.

Labour Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, announced the new wage structure at a news conference at his office, in the presence of the wage board chairman Ikteder Ahmed, FBCCI president AK Azad, BGMEA president Abdus Salam Murshedy, and BKMEA president Selim Oslam.

Under the new structure, an entry point worker a helper, placed at grade-7, would get Tk 3,000 a month from November, up from Tk 1,662, set in 2006.

A grade-6 worker would get 3,210, up from Tk 1,851; grade-5 -Tk 3,455, up from Tk 2,046; grade-4 - Tk 3,763, up from Tk 2,250; grade-3- Tk 4,120, up from Tk 2,449; grade-2 - Tk 7,200 up from Tk 3,840 and a grade-1 worker would get Tk 9,300, up from Tk 5,140. It takes 14 days for a new wage structure to come into effect after it's notification on the official gazette.

During this period, the law allows either of the two parties, the employers and the workers, to go to the board to lodge their dissent.

The wage board recommended the new pay structure, when the owners' representative did not sign it. The employers signed it two days later.

The employers lobbied the government and the wage board for two days to delay implementation by four months and seeking extra incentives for the industry.

The minister said replying to a question that three months time had been allowed for implementation for arriving at a unanimous decision on the new wage structure. Recently, he had said that the apparel workers' wages would be increased before the Eid-ul-Fitre, to be celebrated in the second week of September.

Asked whether the workers could feel frustrated not getting the new wages during the Eid, he said, 'We increased the wages before the Eid.' But the workers said that due to delayed implementation 2.5 million workers would be deprived of increased wages and festival bonuses during the Eid.

Industry analysts said that the industry owners would save approximately Tk 2,000 crore by delaying the implementation by three months.

The industry owners said that as the cost of production is based on existing wages so they needed time to bargain with importers to re-fix the prices.

BGMEA president Abdus Salam Murshedy said the industry owners would be delighted to increase the wages but for the depressed prices of the products due to global recession and production losses due to gas and electricity supply crisis. He said that these factors eroded their capacity to pay higher wages.

Mushrefa Mishu, the convenor of the Garment Workers Unity Forum said that that by fixing Tk 3,000 as the entry point wage, the owners had bluffed the apparel workers.

By delaying the implementation of the "so called increased wages," she said, the government only bowed to the owners. 'As the workers don't accept Tk 3,000 as the minimum wage,' she said, we are thinking of a movement against the pay structure.'

In all 14 rounds of negotiations took place between the employers and the workers brokered by government representatives at the tripartite wage board in last six months, many of which proved stormy with the employers remaining reluctant to increase of the wages, fixed nearly five years back. Industry owners said that the new wages will reduce their profit margin and make it difficult to compete in the global market.

Monetary policy announced: investment in unproductive sectors discouraged

The Bangladesh Bank has announced the monetary policy for July-December, assuring of speeding up investment in productive sectors and discouraging unproductive speculative investment to help the country tackle inflationary challenges.

Central bank governor Dr Atiur Rahman announced the new monetary policy at a press conference at the BB headquarters in Dhaka. 'Monetary policies in the current financial year will be maintained on a growth supportive stance to promote faster inclusive economic growth, with due vigil against inflationary pressure,' Atiur said.

With the implementation of the half-yearly policy guideline for banking sector, people will get less credit for buying land, houses, apartments and other consumer products when fund flow to investments and productive sectors will increase, sources said.

'The central bank will certainly support more lending to agriculture, SMEs, renewable energy and other productive sector, but it will discourage credit growth in the non-productive sectors,' said Atiur. Like the previous one, the new policy statement will continue pursuing the dual objectives of containing inflation and

accelerating financial inclusion for poverty reduction and faster economic growth, the governor said. He said discouraging spending for non-productive purposes would be a major tool to attain this objective of non-inflationary growth. Atiur sought for active role from the civil society leaders to support the initiatives of the central bank, added United News of Bangladesh.

Replying to a question the governor said the growth in export and import was 'deep-negative' in the last financial year due to global downturn.

'We've turned around since April last as we're recovering from global recession and the export growth returned to a positive trend,' he said, hoping that both export and import growth will reach the double digit.

In response to another question he said the GDP growth rate would improve further if energy crisis is mitigated. The governor said average CPI (consumer price index) inflation rate would remain within 6.5 per cent at the end of the current fiscal.

Despite easing in domestic annual point to point CPI (consumer price index) inflation trend from March last year, average domestic inflation crept to 6.51 per cent in April this year marginally crossing the target of 6.50 per cent. The governor also said they would remain proactive in liquidity management operations.

The government set the GDP growth target for the current fiscal at 6.7 per cent and inflation at 6.5 per cent. 'To achieve the target we need favourable weather for agriculture, rapid recovery in export growth with market diversification and substantial increase in power and gas supply,' the governor said.

In the new monetary policy, the BB has discouraged the commercial banks to excessive investment in the capital market to avoid risk. Circular has been issued to the banks directing them to keep investment in capital market with the prescribed limit. BB deputy governors Md Nazrul Huda, Ziaul Hasan Siddiqui and Murshid Kuli Khan and advisers were present in the press conference.

Gas crisis, technical glitches worsening power scenario

Gas crisis coupled with technical glitches have been seriously hampering electricity generation, leading to frequent power outages besides low gas pressure across the country.

Despite initiation of around 571 megawatts (mw) of electricity generation afresh during the last 18 months, as claimed by the Power Development Board (PDB), the country's electricity supply situation did not improve at all, said sources. This is because the power plants are

not getting adequate gas supply, and some operational plants are being tripped, said a PDB official. Overall electricity generation Tuesday was around 3,800 mw, while gas output was 1,990 million cubic feet (mmcf).

PDB officials said gas supply shortfall hampered power generation at Raujan, Tongi, Haripur and Baghabari plants, whereas generation halted at Ghorashal and Shiddhirganj plants due to technical glitches.

Residents of Mirpur, Kalyanpur, Badda, Rampura, Khilgaon, Jatrabari, Nawabpur and old Dhaka have been the worst sufferers of the nagging gas crisis and frequent load-shedding. In Dhaka, load shedding was the highest - 432 mw, followed by 150 mw in Chittagong, 132 mw in Khulna, 124 mw in Rajshahi, 89 mw in Comilla, 70 mw in Mymensingh, 56 mw in Rangpur and 25 mw in Barisal.

Tariff to be raised to allow power sector investors to get fair prices: Muhith

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith has assured potential power sector investors that the power prices would be increased to make investment attractive.

The assurance came at a conference titled 'Investment in Power Sector of Bangladesh: Opportunities and Challenges', organised by Power Division Board at Sonargaon Hotel.

'Please do not expect we will double the price [of electricity], but we will do it in phases,' the Finance Minister told the group of potential investors who attended the conference from home and abroad, reported Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha.

Muhith at the same time also reaffirmed that the government would continue subsidy to the power sector so the power prices would not go beyond people's reach.

The minister expected the economy would grow much higher than the present rate in the next two years with increased investment in the power sector. He said that the country should come out of the power crisis from mid-2012 as the government has undertaken huge projects to mitigate power shortage, reported United News of Bangladesh.

'This year we may not be able to overcome the power crisis. The crisis will even persist next year and also part of the year 2012. But after that there should be equilibrium between the demand and supply,' said Muhith.

Muhith said the government is working on preparing a coal policy to extract the country's coal resources for power generation. 'We hope, we'll get the policy in hand

by the end of the current year'. Emphasising introduction of regional energy trade, he said this is something that was introduced globally about 50 years back. The Power Division organised the conference as a follow-up of the government's road-shows abroad that took place in London, New York and Singapore last year.

The road shows targeted attracting investment to generate an additional 9,426 megawatts of electricity by 2015 through setting up of power plants, both in private and public sectors.

Prime minister's adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury invited again the potential investors to come forward for taking the benefit of investing to meet the huge present and future demands, added Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha. He said the pick-hour shortage is around 30 per cent of the current demand when only one-third of the populations have access to the power.

Board of Investment executive chairman SA Samad said the energy sector needs 24 per cent growth if the country grows at 8 per cent growth rate.

PDB chairman ASM Alamgir Kabir made a presentation on the new projects undertaken by the government in both the public and private sectors.

Two lakh to come under tax net

The National Board of Revenue has assessed that at least 2,00,000 new taxpayers would come into the tax-net because of submission of mandatory TIN (taxpayers' identification number) for renewal of fitness of the commercially-run vehicles. The new step, already made effective from July 1, would also yield several hundred crore taka in revenue, said the NBR officials.

The number of motorised vehicles owners in the country is about 1.3 million. One third of them own commercially run vehicles like buses, mini-buses and trucks. They were not subjected to submit their TINs while taking renewal certificates from the Bangladesh Road transport Authority in the past.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith told newsmen that owners of vehicles should pay income tax. He noted that further stringent income tax measures would be imposed on the wealthy people in coming years as their number has gone up significantly in the country.

NBR officials observed that the new step has been taken after the measure for mandatory submission of TIN for registration of cars yielded a good result.

The new measure would be a significant step taken with a view to compelling well-off section of the society to pay income tax.

The government is desperate to expand income tax net as there are only 2.2 million holders of taxpayer's identification numbers. Only a third of the TIN holders pay income tax regularly. Bangladesh has the lowest tax-GDP ratio in South Asia.

Besides the new step, the NBR has hiked advanced income tax for registration and renewal of vehicles substantially. The hike ranges between 125 per cent and 166 per cent for different cylinder capacity vehicles.

The vehicle owners will have to pay income tax of Tk 8,000 instead of the existing Tk 3,000 for registration and fitness certificates for cars up to 1,500 cc.

The income tax has been increased to Tk 10,000 from Tk 4,000 for a car up to 2,000cc. The income tax for a car above 2,000cc is likely to be raised to Tk 16,000 from Tk 7,000. For a 2,800cc jeep, the tax will be raised to Tk 14,000 from Tk 6,000, and from Tk 8,000 to Tk 18,000 for a jeep of more than 2,800cc. The new rate for a microbus may be increased to Tk 8,000 from Tk 3,000.

NBR revenue up

The revenue board beat its target and recorded an 18 percent growth in revenue collection in fiscal 2009-10 compared to the previous year. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) earned Tk 62,007.47 crore against the target of Tk 61,000 crore set for the last fiscal year. The earning was Tk 52,527.25 crore in fiscal 2008-09.

Meanwhile, around Tk 923 crore in black money was legalised in four categories last fiscal year, and the NBR earned Tk 121.2 crore as tax from the money whitening.

Revenue from import rose 9.68 percent, while value added tax (VAT) and income tax posted 24.51 percent and 23.3 percent growth respectively.

The tax administrator collected Tk 22,891.37 crore from import revenue, and the earnings from VAT and income tax stood at Tk 21,643.25 crore and Tk 17,087.14 crore respectively. Also, the revenue earning from supplementary duty grew by around 26 percent to reach Tk 10,682.13 crore in fiscal 2009-10.

However, other taxes, including travel tax, went down 7.39 percent, according to statistics disclosed by the NBR at a press conference in Dhaka. Nasiruddin Ahmed, chairman of the NBR, said the board has reached the target for the third time in the last 10 years. "We are taking a series of measures to strengthen the revenue collection efforts. We have revised the rates of VAT and customs duty to enhance the revenue figures," he said

The NBR is taking steps to revamp its internal mechanism, such as automating the entire tax collection process, and strengthening the Central Intelligence Cell, to spot tax evasion cases, Ahmed said.

A total of 1,923 people whitened around Tk 923 crore by investing in new industries and infrastructure, stockmarket, flat and land purchase, and BMRE (balancing, modernisation, rehabilitation and expansion) last fiscal year. "The amount (whitened) will cross Tk 1,500 crore," said Ahmed. People were given scope last year to whiten black money by paying 10 percent tax and investing in the share market, new industry and BMRE.

For flat and land purchase, the holders of undisclosed money were given a chance to legalise their money by paying fees of different amounts, depending on the size of the flat and land.

As many as 162 people whitened Tk 239 crore in new industries and infrastructure, while 145 people whitened Tk 257.28 crore in BMRE, and 296 whitened around Tk 29 crore by investing in the stock market. Ahmed said a total of 1,320 people whitened money for purchasing flat and land. The board expects the amount whitened in this sector to cross Tk 500 crore. "The figure is not satisfactory at all. We could collect more."

Ahmed blamed complicated laws and staff shortage for the poor collection from the undisclosed income. The NBR brought 3.43 lakh new taxpayers under the tax net in the last 10 months, said the chairman.

Tariff Commission to be reorganised

The government is going to restructure Bangladesh Tariff Commission (BTC) and rename it Trade Commission to accelerate its capacity.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan announced plans to restructure the research-based organisation, to expedite its activities. He was speaking as chief guest at the concluding session of the fresher reception and training programme of the newly joined officers of the organisation at the BTC conference room. Khan emphasised bringing trade balance between exports and imports by conducting an in-depth analysis.

Bangladesh allows import of coal with high sulphur

The government has decided to allow import of coal with over one per cent of sulphur up to June 30, 2011 although the high level of sulphur in coal is considered hazardous for environment. The government decided to suspend a provision in the export-import policy 2009-12 that had barred import of coal with over one per cent of sulphur.

The provision was included in section-25 and sub-section (33) of the export- import policy. A decision to this effect was taken at an inter-ministerial meeting at the Ministry of Commerce, an official release said.

With Commerce Secretary Golam Hossain in the chair, the meeting was held to find out ways and means to resolve the problem regarding import of coals, the release said.

Power and Mineral Resources Division joint secretary Ahmed Ullah, Department of Environment additional director general M Abdus Sobhan, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry adviser Monjur Ahmed, Sylhet Coal Importers Association president M Emdad Hossain, among others, joined the meeting.

India's Meghalaya, West Bengal and Bihar are the major sources of coal imports for Bangladesh. China and Indonesia are also exporting coals to Bangladesh but those are expensive, the release added.

Bangladesh doing its best to deepen trade ties with India

Commerce Minister Muhammed Faruk Khan has said the government is business-friendly and will do its best to deepen trade ties between Bangladesh and India. He made the remarks at a meeting with an Indian delegation at his ministry.

Mani Shankar Aiyar, former union minister of India and member of Rajya Sabha and Indian National Congress Party, led the Indian team.

The government is aware of para-tariff and non-tariff on trade between India and Bangladesh, Khan said, adding that the government would actively work to remove all barriers.

Aiyar expressed happiness over the existing trade ties between Bangladesh and the northeastern states of India, and wanted to improve the relations.

The Indian delegation emphasised removal of trade barriers. Aiyar said: "We'll remove all barriers for better trade." The Indian team mentioned that Bangladesh and "seven sisters" of India are the most prosperous regions in the world for trade.

"There may be political boundary, but we want to remove the economic boundary," he said. Khan said intra-regional trade had been 25 percent of the total trade in the pre-liberation period while the volume of trade came down to only 5 percent now.

After the meeting, India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Merchants' Chamber of Commerce of India signed a memorandum of understanding that aims at increasing trade, economic, commercial, technological and friendly relationships between Bangladesh and India.

Business leaders seek removal of trade barriers

Business leaders called upon the Indian business delegation for their active cooperation to remove all barriers to improve bilateral trade and business between the two neighbours

President of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry AK Azad in a meeting with the 31-member delegation said the trade volume with India would increase substantially if Indian authorities rightly address the tariff and para-tariff issues.

The business delegation from north-east India held meeting with FBCCI leaders at the apex-body's headquarters at Motijheel. The Indian delegation invited the Bangladesh business leaders to take advantage of the business opportunities in north eastern region known as seven sisters and proposed further talks in Agartala within six months.

'Bangladesh's both eyes are always focused on West Bengal but there are huge business opportunities in NE which remained unfocused to Bangladesh,' said Aiyar.

Azad presided over the discussion attended by Indian high commissioner Rajeet Mitter, India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Abdul Matlub Ahmad, FBCCI first vice president Jashim Uddin Khan, and members of NE business delegation.

Aiyar viewed that Bangladesh would be highly benefited and its growth rate might accelerate by 2 per cent if it avails the opportunities as North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy provides a number of facilities including tax exemption, capital investment subsidy, interest subsidy and comprehensive insurance.

Mentioning the Indian government's vision 2020, he said the government has allocated Rs 20 lakh crore for its northeastern region which lacks managerial, technical and technological support to implement the programme and urged the Bangladeshi businessmen to take the advantage.

'It's a huge cake [Rs 20 lakh crore]. If you get a slice of it, you will reduce trade imbalance with India to a large extent,' Aiyar said.

Explaining geographical advantages with long border, he said Bangladeshi businesspeople would get greater scope in the NE region compared to Indian businessmen.

'The Indian government has planned to raise the growth to 9 per cent in the NE region which is now at half of the mark. Without Bangladesh's cooperation, it's not possible to achieve the target.' He said Chittagong and Mongla ports have been 'made available' to India

through prime minister Sheikh Hasina's New Delhi visit in January this year. 'Now road connectivity needs to be modernised and well-connected for better trade relations.'

He proposed a follow-up meeting between FBCCI delegation led by its president AK Azad and NE trade delegation within next six months in Agartala to put things together for further discussion on trade ties between them.

Closed state-run jute mills being re-opened: Matia

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said the government is taking steps to reopen the closed state-run jute mills, including the Adamjee Jute Mills, in phases.

She said some of the jute mills might be run in partnership with private entrepreneurs as the government was not in a position to operate all the closed mills under its own management now.

'Measures are under way to reopen the large jute mills, including Adamjee, in phases. The Awami League government will keep its electoral pledge to revitalise the jute sector,' Matia said in reply to questions of reporters a briefing at the secretariat.

She said most of the state-owned jute mills had been closed after 1975 to prove the nationalisation of jute mills by the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a disaster and to discourage jute cultivation.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith on another occasion on the day said smooth operation of the jute mills under the corruption-ridden Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation was impossible. He also said the government had already taken some measures to reopen the jute mills in phases in partnership with private entrepreneurs.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's founding president, nationalised all the jute mills after the independence in 1971.

Matia said the Awami League-led government would do everything to revive the glorious past of jute, once known as the golden fibre of Bangladesh.

Addressing the briefing, she, however, said the government had allocated a fund of Tk 30 crore initially to encourage the farmers in 28 districts for adoption of a technology called ribbon retting, developed by the Bangladesh Jute Research Institute which is said to use small amount of water and reduce wastage by 16 per cent.

Some 15,000 ribboners, or small machines used to separate raw jute from the stalk, will be distributed among jute farmers free in the selected districts along with Tk 200 for each farmer for digging mini-pond and procuring polythene and urea for separating the raw jute from the stalk. At least 15 lakh farmers will benefit from the initiative.

Some 100 farmers in each ward will be able to use a ribboner by turn while an assistant agriculture officer will coordinate the activities under the agriculture ministry, the minister said, adding that the raw jute would be soaked in the pond where fertiliser would be used to expedite retting.

The Adamjee Jute Mills was closed during the tenure of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led alliance government on June 30, 2002 on grounds of losses being incurred. Around 16 out of the 27 jute mills, under government management, are now in operation, according to officials.

Bangladesh ranks fourth in global apparel exports

Bangladesh has ranked fourth in the global apparel exports and grabbed three percent market share, according to a recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) report. Bangladesh secured the fourth position in terms of value followed by China, EU-27 countries and Turkey, said the report.

According to the report, China exported apparel items worth \$115 billion, EU-27 countries \$103.40 billion, Turkey \$14 billion and Bangladesh more than \$10 billion. The report was prepared on the basis of export data of 2007 of the respective countries.

Faruque Hassan, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the latest position of Bangladesh might be third in terms of value and volume, as apparel exports have maintained steep growth over the last few years.

Apparel exports of the competing countries increased in some markets but decreased in some others, while Bangladesh's growth was steady in all the markets, he said. On the basis of BGMEA data, he said volume-wise Bangladesh's position was second in knitwear exports last year, followed by China.

Hassan said the three-decade old garment industry of Bangladesh has transformed on its own into a global sourcing hub.

Bangladesh was the largest exporter of cotton T-shirts and was second for cotton pullover and jeans exports to European countries in 2009. In terms of volume, the country was the second largest exporter of cotton trousers to the US last year, he added.

The BGMEA data also said Bangladesh exported 127.14 million dozens of woven garments and 206.20 million dozens of knitwear during the July-March period of fiscal 2009-10.

The exports were 169.59 million dozens of woven and 290.92 million dozens of knit in fiscal 2008-09. The latest data from state-owned Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) said Bangladesh fetched \$12.59 billion from garment exports last fiscal year, and contributed around 80 percent to national exports.

Of the total amount, the country exported knitwear items worth \$6.48 billion, and woven worth \$6.01 billion, registering a 0.84 percent and 1.60 percent growth respectively, according to the EPB data.

Bangladesh also exported terry towel worth \$157.07 million, textile fabrics worth \$8.22 million, knitted fabrics worth \$20.68 million and home textile worth \$539.28 million in fiscal 2009-10.

Last year Bangladesh also explored some new export destinations such as Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and some countries of South America and South Africa.

New scheme to boost renewable energy

The government has sought proposals from different agencies to encourage private entrepreneurs into renewable energy. As part of its effort, the government has designed a purchase plan, known as feed-in-tariff (FIT), which sector leaders say can be a sustainable alternative to solving the power crisis.

In its simplest sense, FIT is the preferential rate paid for the electricity fed back into the national grid from a renewable energy generator. Currently, the total demand for power is 5,500 megawatts, whereas renewable energy covers only 30 megawatts, according to a government estimate.

In response to the Power Ministry's call, Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL) submitted a proposal to the government. GTZ, the development assistance arm of the German government, also plans to submit a proposal soon. More than 64 countries adopted FIT in an effort to find a solution to the power crisis.

The concept of FIT came first in the US in 1974, when the American government urged the private sector to come forward to solve the crisis. In China, the production of power from wind energy is rising.

The Indian government also adopted a separate policy to boost renewable energy through FIT. In calculating FIT, India used some fixed-cost components that may be useful for Bangladesh, said IDCOL in its proposal.

The components were -- return of equity, interest on loan capital, depreciation, interest on working capital, operating and maintenance expenses.

Siddique Zobair, consultant of GTZ, said the concept of FIT should be made clear to the public before the government implements it.

Zobair said FIT is a mechanism to promote renewable energy in the private sector. The fund may come from different sources, such as government and donors, he added. Zobair said if the government is unable to promote renewable energy, subsidy to the power sector might run into Tk 30,000 crore in 15 years. "It will be a tough situation for the government in future."

SM Formanul Islam, director for legal affairs and company secretary of IDCOL, suggested the government transfer the subsidy from diesel to the renewable energy sector.

Abser Kamal, the acting managing director of Grameen Shakti, said: "It will be a good initiative for private investors if transparency is maintained."

Uniqlo teams up with Yunus

Social business finds a new route now this time entering the garments sector. Grameen Bank Group is partnering with Fast Retailing Company Ltd that owns Japan's casual-clothing chain Uniqlo.

Under a joint venture, a textile unit will be set up in Bangladesh in September to help the underprivileged women. The Japanese company and Grameen Bank Group have agreed in Tokyo to launch the venture through a Fast Retailing subsidiary.

Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who is promoting the social business model, said the textiles company will help poor women and solve social problems, including those related to poverty, sanitation and education, through planning, production and sale of clothing.

Fast Retailing plans to invest some \$100,000 to set up the business, temporarily dubbed as Grameen Uniqlo Ltd, for producing and retailing the products in the country, a statement said. Grameen Bank will take a 1 percent stake in the venture, according to a Reuters report.

"On the retail front, we will use the Grameen Bank Group's borrower network of eight million people to help those living in poverty to develop job skills and provide them with opportunities to sell clothes door-to-door," said Fast Retailing.

"In the first year, we plan to generate work for 250 people and to increase this figure to 1,500 within three years."

"Grameen ladies will become their own business owners by selling the clothing products in visits to neighbours' houses," news agency AFP quoted Tadashi Yanai, chairman and president of Fast Retailing, as saying.

Yunus is backed by corporations such as food giant Danone, global water group Veolia, sportswear company Adidas and software company SAP. Fast Retailing will be the first Asian corporation to start a social business with Grameen Bank Group, Yunus said.

"Uniqlo is a global company, a big company, and a company that is now creating a social business in Bangladesh," he said at a Tokyo press conference, adding that the world needs a new economic "architecture" to fight poverty.

Uniqlo opened its liaison office in Dhaka in September last year although it had previously outsourced RMG products through an agent. It has a network of over 760 stores in Japan. The company opened stores outside Japan in September 2001 starting in London. It expanded international network across six countries - the UK, China, Hong Kong, the US, South Korea, France.

According to data from state-owned Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh exported knitwear items worth \$60.02 million in the first 10 months of the immediate past fiscal year, which was \$18.15 million in the same period of fiscal 2008-09.

In the July-April period of fiscal 2009-10, knitwear exports to Japan grew by 230.65 percent. Bangladesh logged \$89.87 million in earnings from woven garment exports, registering a robust 121.46 percent growth over the same period a year ago. Data showed that RMG exports to Japan were worth \$74.38 million in fiscal 2008-09, compared to \$28.04 million in fiscal 2007-08.

Border market with India to open soon

Markets along borders with India at various spots will open within two or three months, Commerce Minister Muhammed Faruk Khan said.

Khan said trade relations between two countries as well as harmony between people of both countries will be strengthened the border markets open. He warned dishonest businessmen against profiteering through artificially increasing prices of commodities during the Ramzan. The government is aware of it ahead of the Ramzan.

He warned of tough steps against those indulging in profiteering and trying to destabilise markets. The minister was speaking at the opening ceremony 12th Sylhet International Trade Fair at Shahi Edgah playground.

A trade fair paves way for massive expansion of domestic products and creates scope for comparing the quality of domestic products with overseas products, he said. He said cargo planes would be operated from Sylhet and a permanent venue for the trade fair would be set up.

Over the development of Sylhet district, he said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is sincere about developing Sylhet city and takes stock of Sylhet's development in all ECNEC meeting. The Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry administrator presided over the opening ceremony.

Use IP to facilitate development

Policymakers of 15 least developed countries (LDCs) held discussions on how intellectual property (IP) could be used as a tool for economic development. They urged the developed countries to help them reduce the knowledge gap by transferring technology and with research and development.

Ministers, members of parliament and senior government officials of the Asia-Pacific region made the observations at a two-day high-level forum at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

The forum addressed issues on how the LDCs can foster national development and productive integration in the global economy in line with the IP. "IP is a tool for economic development. Also, technology is a useful tool," said Telefoni Misa, deputy prime minister of the Independent State of Samoa.

Yuke Chin Lee, IP consultant for Malaysian Invention and Design Society, said every country has to adopt a national innovation agenda to encourage creativity. Lee told the meeting that Malaysia launched a national innovation agenda in 2007.

Nuno Pires De Carvalho, acting director of IP and Competition Policy Division of World Intellectual Property Organisation, presented a paper outlining the benefits and challenges of IP.

He said IP is the branch of law that protects differentiating business assets. It encourages creativity and helps attract foreign direct investment, he added.

Dewan Zakir Hussain, Secretary of the Industries Ministry, also spoke. The world, particularly the LDCs, is facing fundamental challenges in dealing with IP systems. The knowledge gap and digital divide are the foremost challenges for them.

Many LDCs are yet to identify their IP related needs as per an international requirement. The LDCs are also lagging behind in new innovations, technologies, creativity, knowledge talent and management techniques that are a must to enhance productivity and competitiveness. IP related issues have also emerged as vital in the services sector.

Forum participants have discussed how they can use IP to contribute to a reduction of the knowledge gap and digital divide. They felt the need for an access to scientific and technological information, to minimise the gap. Setting up IP institutions, more investment in research and development and technology transfer are also important to develop the capacity of the LDCs in this regard. Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the meeting.

Exports miss target

Exports fell 7.93 percent short of the target set for the last fiscal year, according to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data. Bangladesh fetched \$16.20 billion from exports against the target of \$17.60 billion.

However, export earning was 4.11 percent higher compared to fiscal 2008-09, when the country earned \$15.57 billion. The earning was \$1.72 billion in June, a 21.24 percent rise over the same month a year ago. Exporters said they missed the target mainly due to a slump in demand for some products, especially frozen foods.

Bangladesh fetched \$6.48 billion from knit exports last fiscal year, registering a 0.84 percent growth compared to 2008-09. However, the knitwear exports fell 11.15 percent short of the annual target.

The country exported woven garments worth \$6.01 billion in 2009-10. The segment posted a 1.60 percent growth compared to fiscal 2008-09, but fell 10.09 percent short of the annual export target.

Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the country could have earned more from apparel exports, but it was not possible because of the acute power and gas crises, labour unrest and weak infrastructure.

Bangladesh enjoyed good export orders in the last four months of the fiscal year, as orders from China shifted to Bangladesh, he added. "The overall price of the garment items remained static."

Exports to Spain decline significantly

Bangladesh's exports to Spain declined by a significant extent in the last fiscal year, reversing the trend of continuous growth in the previous years. Spain is one of the top European market destinations for Bangladesh's readymade garments and home textiles, and finished leather and footwear are also among the major exports to the present World Cup champion.

The latest report of the Export Promotion Bureau showed that Bangladesh's exports to Spain amounted to \$514 million in the 11 months of the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

'We are calculating the exports in June 2010 and assuming that total exports to Spain in the just ended fiscal year will be at least \$20 million less than in the previous fiscal year,' a senior EPB official said.

Exports to Spain in the 2008-09 fiscal year were recorded at \$600 million as Spanish retailers, hit by the recession, could not increase procurements that year too. In the 2007-08 fiscal year export earnings from Spain amounted to about \$600 million, in 2006-07 to about \$528 million, in 2005-06 to about \$405 million and in 2004-05 to about \$329 million.

Shahidullah Azim, managing director of Classic Fashion Garment, which sources the Spanish brand called Bershka, said that the prices paid by Spanish importers declined considerably and that had an adverse impact on Bangladesh's overall export earnings from Spain.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said that the Spanish economy, hit hard by the recession and unemployment, has suffered in the last two years, due to which our exports have declined.

'Bangladesh exports to Spain will increase again as many Spanish brands are eager to import from Bangladesh; even Spanish giant Inditex has shown interest in expanding the amount of imports from Bangladesh,' he said. The BGMEA arranged a warehouse for Bangladeshi exporters in Spain a couple of months ago to facilitate deliveries to Spanish buyers, he said.

Mobile subscribers now 60 million

The number of mobile users in the country reached nearly 60 million at the end of the last financial year [till June 30] after the six operators added 13.29 million subscribers in FY 2009-10.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's data showed that the number of active users of mobile phones rose to 59.98 million on 30 June this year from 46.29 million on 30 June last year. The operators added 1.52 million new subscribers in June this year. An executive of a mobile company claimed

that the number of subscribers would have been greater if the government had not imposed the tax of Tk 800 that they have to pay for each SIM.

Mobile operators claimed that they gave 'subsidy' to each new subscriber by selling every SIM at a price much below Tk 800, mainly because of the fierce competition between mobile companies.



The largest operator, Grameenphone, added 5.3 million subscribers in the just concluded financial year, and added 0.91 million consumers in June to take its total subscriber base to 26.46 million.

The total number of subscribers for Banglalink stood at 16.10 million at the end of the last fiscal year as the company added 5.06 million consumers in one year. It attracted 0.51 million subscribers in June.

The subscriber base of Robi, which was previously known as Aktel, reached 11.10 million at the end of June as it added 2.25 million subscribers in one year. It added 0.14 million subscribers in June.

Warid Telecom, the greater part of which was recently acquired by India's Bharati Airtel, added 0.59 million subscribers in a year, and the total number of its subscribers reached 3.17 million at the end of the last financial year. The company added 0.09 million subscribers in June.

The subscriber base of City Cell, the lone CDMA mobile operator, reached 1.99 million as it added only 0.03 million subscribers in a year. There was no addition to company's subscriber base in June this year.

Teletalk, the state-run mobile operator, added only 0.06 million subscribers in a year and its total number of subscribers was 1.16 million at the end of June. The number of active subscribers of the company declined by 0.03 million in June.

Indonesia wants to boost trade ties with Bangladesh

Indonesian Ambassador to Bangladesh Zet Mirzal Zainuddin has called for expanding trade relations between Bangladesh and his country.

The Ambassador made the remarks while exchanging views with local businessmen and civil society members at the conference room of the Narayanganj deputy commissioner.

Zainuddin assured extending his cooperation for simplifying the visa process of Indonesia. He said the trade deficit between the two countries was gradually decreasing since 1998. The Ambassador called upon the Bangladeshi businessmen to do business with palm oil, motor parts and train-bus of his country.

Replying to a query from Manjurul Haque, a director of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Zainuddin assured providing his assistance in creating Bangladesh's knitwear market in Indonesia.

Narayanganj deputy commissioner M Shamsur Rahman chaired the meeting. Later, the Indonesian Ambassador along with others visited the Sonargaon Folklore Museum.

Bangladesh sets plan to attract one million tourists

The government has targeted to attract one million tourists next year by implementing an aggressive tourism promotional campaign-'Visit Banglaesh-2011'.

'We are taking huge preparation for conducting promotional campaign at home and abroad next year targeting those foreign tourists, who are looking for new destinations of making holidays,' Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader said. At present, on an average, 4,00,000 foreign travellers visit Bangladesh a year.

The government has chosen the year 2011 to observe tourism year as one of the mega events of the earth - World Cup cricket-will be hosted in the country this year, he said. 'Initially, we have set a target of receiving one million foreign tourists during the tourism year 2011 and expecting more than two million afterwards,' he said.

The minister said Parjatan Corporation, the national tourism facilitating body, has already chalked out lots of events for round the year blending with traditional, cultural, tribal and religious festivals, he said.

The year-long programme which will initially cost Tk 150 crore also includes staging of road shows and Bangladesh week in different countries as well as inviting foreign renowned international travel writers and journalists to visit Bangladesh.

The promotional campaign for the tourist year would be conducted as public private partnership. 'We are looking for private organisations for holding international standard events as well as conducting overseas promotional campaign,' he added. He said the Tourism Ministry has already selected more than 750 places as tourist spots and taken initiatives to develop infrastructure facilities there with the help of Local Government Division.

The ministry is actively considering for building some special tourist zones only for the foreigners with foreign investment, the minister added.

The country has lots of tourist tempting treasures in terms of natural beauty, culture, heritage and archaeological aspects, he said, adding but 'we have never conducted such huge international promotional campaign to attract travellers.' 'We have to spread the message among the foreigners that Bangladesh is enriched with many resources attractive to travellers,' Quader said.

Detailing the government's plan to boost up tourism sector, the minister said the government has already formulated a national tourism policy and enacted two laws styled 'Bangladesh Reserved Areas for Tourism and Special Tourism Zones Act-2010' and 'Bangladesh Parjatan Board Act-2010'.

The policy and the two laws will help us to establish a world standard planned and eco-friendly tourism in the country which could be served as one of the major foreign exchange earning sources of the country, he said.

Poultry sector projected to add 10 million jobs in six years

Poultry sector will create job opportunity for 10 million people in next five to seven years, said poultry industry leaders at a round-table discussion in Dhaka.

'Poultry industry will be a leading sector in Bangladesh creating job opportunity for 10 million people,' said Moshir Rahman, convenor of the Poultry National Coordination Committee at the discussion organized by the Breeders Association of Bangladesh at the National Press Club.

He claimed that they were supplying quality protein to people at the 'cheapest rate' in the world. 'We could export poultry products to foreign market if the government takes necessary steps.'

The breeders said that they were making progress despite bird flu, price hike of raw materials, market aggression of neighbouring country and lack of patronisation by the government.

Breeders association president Kazi Zahedul Islam claimed that investment in the poultry sector would be doubled if the government support was ensured.

India to build infrastructure to carry goods from Kolkata to Tripura

India has agreed to build the necessary infrastructure to carry goods from Kolkata to Tripura through Bangladesh.

The concerned Indian authorities will dredge the waterway from Kolkata river port of India to the Ashuganj river port of Bangladesh and construct a 40 kilometre roadway from Ashuganj to Akhaura. Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan said after a meeting he had with Rajeet Mitter, the Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh.

After the meeting, which was held at the secretariat, the minister told reporters that the two sides also discussed the use of the Ashuganj river port and the Chittagong and Mangla seaports.

Khan said that India was going to set up a power plant in Tripura and that they would have to transport a lot of building materials for construction. India will have to use the Ashuganj port to carry the Over Dimension Consignments (ODCs) from Kolkata to Tripura.

The company that won the tender to construct the power station will also build the 40 kilometre road, Khan added.

The minister said they also talked about setting up a new landing station and a container jetty in Bangladesh. Secretary to the Shipping Ministry, Abdul Mannan was also present at the meeting.

Poverty haunts India's economic miracle

When flames from an open cooking fire raced through Fida Hussein's shack in northern India, it was a disaster for him and his poverty-stricken family. 'We have nothing,' said Hussein as he stood in the ruins of his hut through which the sky could be seen between the burnt roof timbers in a remote corner of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state.

India's number of millionaires grew by 51 per cent to 1,26,700 in 2009, according to US investment bank Merrill Lynch and consultants Capgemini, boosted by a buoyant economy which grew 8.6 per cent in the last fiscal quarter. But increasing wealth has not trickled down to the likes of 40-year-old Hussein, a landless labourer whose seamed face is prematurely aged, and his family of six children who have no toys, books or other possessions.

'We have no clothes, no furniture,' he said. 'But there's no use in crying - no one hears us.' Like the more than 400 million Indians who have no electricity, Hussein's

home has no lighting and there is no running water in the huts in his village, which lies 60 kilometres (40 miles) from the state capital Lucknow. In 1947, in his midnight independence address, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, called for 'the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.'

It's an end that still seems a long way off. In April, the Planning Commission, India's premier economic policymaking body, raised its estimate of the number of Indians living in poverty - unable to meet their nutritional needs - from 28 per cent to 37 per cent, which is roughly 440 million of the 1.2 billion population.

A new international Multiple Poverty Index, developed at Oxford University and measuring a wide range of household-level deprivation, suggests that more people are mired in poverty in just eight Indian states than in the 26 poorest African countries.

'There are two categories growing in the 'Rising India'... the super rich, and the abysmally poor,' noted newspaper editor MJ Akbar in a recent column.

The left-of-centre Congress government will spend at least \$250 billion on services for the poor in the next five years but a recent report by investment house CLSA Asia Pacific Markets estimated more than \$100 billion would be skimmed off.

'There's personal gain going on at public cost where people who are supposed to look after the interests of the people accumulate large sums,' Anupama Jha, executive director of Transparency International India, said.

Corruption, she said, is rife - percolating through government, the private sector, the police and the judiciary. Malnutrition among under-fives in India stands at 43.5 per cent - worse than sub-Saharan Africa and only nine percentage points less than when India's 'economic miracle' began in 1991.

During the same period, India's gross domestic product per capita has jumped 50-fold. 'We have gone from being a food deficit country to a food surplus country, which is a big achievement, but there's a lot to be done in terms of getting the food to people who need it,' said Indian political author Ajoy Bose.

Happy with 8.5pc growth

Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said he was sticking to his forecast of 8.5 percent growth for this financial year despite a more bullish IMF projection.

Earlier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) hiked its projection for India's 2010 growth to 9.5 percent from an earlier 8.8 percent forecast. 'I'm being conservative in my assessment,' Mukherjee told a business audience in New Delhi.

"I will be happy with 8.5-percent-plus growth" for the financial year to March 2011, he said. Mukherjee added the eurozone debt crunch would not affect India's growth if it remained confined to Greece "and a couple of other countries".

"But if it assumes larger proportion and dimensions-if it engulfs Europe as a whole-I don't know what may happen," he said.

The debt crisis has forced European governments to bail out Greece and set up a 750-billion-euro loan package with the IMF to help any other state needing help.

While India's expansion slowed to 6.5 percent in the 2008-2009 fiscal year after averaging 9.0 percent growth in the four previous years, the performance was markedly more robust than in many developed countries.

India escaped the brunt of the global financial crisis as rising incomes boosted domestic demand for cars, mobile telephones and other consumer durables even as exports fell. The Indian economy, Asia's largest after Japan and China, could attain double-digit growth by 2013, the government has said.

Car makers see surge in sales

India's carmakers said that sales for the month of June were strong, underscoring consumer demand and industrial growth in Asia's third-largest economy. India's top carmaker Maruti Suzuki said sales jumped 17 per cent last month compared with the same period a year ago while Ford India, Tata Motors and General Motors all also reported a sharp surge.

Car sales in India had tumbled in 2008, hit by higher loan costs and fears of job cuts amid the global financial crisis. But government stimulus steps and an economic turnaround led to a recovery in the sector in 2009. And analysts see sales remaining strong as the economy picks up pace.

'There was pent-up demand for cars which has overflowed into this year,' said Mahantesh Sabarad, senior analyst at Fortune Equity Brokers.

India's economy has expanded by 8.6 per cent year-on-year in the most recent financial quarter and Indian banks are still lending readily.

However, carmakers are hiking the price of their vehicles to compensate for the increased cost of raw materials such as steel and rubber, while the government also announced rises in the price of petrol and diesel.

Japanese-owned Maruti Suzuki India said it sold 88,091 vehicles in June, up from 85,109 the same month a year ago but down from a record 1,02,175 units in May, a fall attributed partly to a plant maintenance shutdown.

Low automobile penetration in India, where many consumers are buying their first cars, is expected to keep the market solidly underpinned and make the nation a lucrative destination for global automakers in coming years.

India remains a highly underpenetrated market with about eight cars per 1,000 people compared with around 850 vehicles per 1,000 people in the United States, according to industry estimates.

The country's largest commercial vehicle maker, Tata Motors, said it sold 67,730 commercial and passenger vehicles in June, up 49 per cent on the same period last year. The rise was driven by passenger vehicle sales, which logged a 63 per cent increase to 27,811, said the company, which makes the world's cheapest car, the Nano.

Sales of commercial vehicles, including trucks, climbed 33 per cent to 26,245 units. Bucking the trend was Hyundai India, the country's second-largest carmaker, which said its sales fell 2.14 per cent to 46,254 in June.

Ford India said sales jumped a massive 267 per cent in June to 7,269 cars, led by its popular Figo model.

General Motors India said it sold 9,539 cars, up 112 per cent from a year earlier, led by the Chevrolet Spark and the newly launched Chevrolet Beat.

Meanwhile, TVS Motor, the third-largest two-wheeler maker by sales, announced a 36-per cent year-on-year jump in June to 1,56,685 units.

Load shedding causes loss of US\$ 6 billion to Pakistan

Load shedding caused US\$ 6 billion loss to Pakistan during 2008 as the experts urged immediate measures for energy conservation and adding more to national energy mix by also exploring alternate resources.

Speaking at an interaction arranged by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), though these experts unanimously supported hydel power, yet they also did not rule out availing from solar, wind, nuclear and coal resource.

"Load shedding cost US\$ 6 billion in 2008 and it may be much more at present," observed energy expert of SDPI Shakeel Ahmed Ramay setting the energy consumption for agriculture at 21%, domestic 31%, street lights 2%, commercial 8%, industrial 31% and traction, bulk supplies and other government usage at 7%.

Though, Ramay showed the generation capacity at 20231 MW with 11,735 MW by public sector and 8496 MW by private sector yet he was confident about hydel

potential to the tune of 50,000 MW as he saw the energy demand to escalate to 113695 MW by 2030.

He also calculated that 25% energy of the total available could be saved with 30% in industrial sector, 20% in transport, 20% in agriculture sector and 30% in buildings thus saving US\$ four billion annually.

Also focussing on oil import bill for 2008, Ramay stated it to be US\$ 11 billion and 63% of the total export earning for the year and cited, Pakistan can earn US\$ 400 million a year by installing environment friendly projects only in energy sector.

Seeing vast potential also in alternate resources, he noted, 346,000 MW potential in wind, 2.9 million MW in solar, 4000 MW in co-generation and biomass, 10,000 MW in off-grid application.

"Are we going towards industry promotion or a consumers' economy. Why not to explore other avenues, if hydro is time consuming," he concluded by pleading to also focus on growing such plant species that help us cut our oil imports.

Another expert Donald Carter mentioned to 4000 to 5000 MW power shortfall and described it as 'chronic' and happening due to more reliance on fossil fuel.

He supported wind energy to meet the variable demands and mentioned to 50 MW micro hydro potential for rural communities.

"Pakistan is best located for solar energy and it can also benefit from recycling municipal and animal waste. One or two technologies cannot meet the demand as a complimentary mix is required," he added.

Environmental expert and former UNEP key expert Shafqat Kakakhel spoke in special reference to earning carbon credit through environment friendly projects and said, 63% of total 1260 projects approved for carbon credit are hydel power projects and 60% of the 2500 projects worldwide are also hydel power projects.

He opposed nuclear power and said, "in a country with abundant hydro potential, I would not recommend nuclear though we may consider alternate options."

He specially mentioned to Malakand area hydro potential and Kunhaar river where he said a series of run-of-river projects can be installed to meet energy demands.

Renowned scientist and Co-Chairman Task Force on Climate Change, Dr Ishfaq Ahmed supported nuclear energy as one of the options and said, 'we should believe in energy mix instead of resting with just one option.'

"Had nuclear energy been so bad, why India and China would have vigorously pursued it." Supporting also run-of-river projects, Dr Ishfaq said, energy intensity in our economy is lower so is the carbon intensity. "We also should not ignore coal as if we can have cleaner technologies, it may not be harmful."

He also underlined to consider variability of water availability and said, wind and solar option cannot be constant source of energy in changing environmental scenario.

Despite their differing points of view, they had consensus to give prime priority to hydel energy though with a mix of other options like wind, solar, coal and nuclear.

Nepal's garment exports to US sink to zero

Long plunging garment exports to the United States have hit rock bottom with not one piece being shipped in June. Nepal's ready-made garment manufacturers received zero orders from the US during the month, The Kathmandu Post daily reported.

Statistics of the Garment Association of Nepal show that garment exports in the first six months of 2010 recorded a decline of 38.9 per cent.

According to GAN, exports to the US amounted to \$2.19 million during the review period. Exports during the first six months of 2009 were worth \$3.59 million.

Exports to the US have been consistently declining since the elimination of quotas in global apparel trading in 2005. The decline in exports to the US in the last four years has pushed Nepal's garment industry to the verge of collapse.

Even though exports to the US had grown by around 25 per cent in January 2010, the last five months have been dismal.

According to GAN, exports have nose-dived by 90 per cent during the period 2005 to 2009. Garment manufacturers are not surprised by this massive decline. 'This is not a new story for the garment industry,' said GAN past president Kiran Sakha. 'Manufacturers and exporters both have lost hope due to the constant labour unrest and bandhs that have crippled production.'

'This was bound to happen,' said trade expert Ratnakar Adhikari. He added that Nepali ready-made garments had been losing competitiveness in the US market. 'Garment manufacturers and exporters should look to other markets including the EU rather than relying on the US market only,' said Adhikari.

With Nepal not being able to get duty-free access for its ready-made garments in the US market, the only hope is the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement which Nepal and the US are to sign in the near future. TIFA has provisions that will help Nepal to gain favourable market access in the US.

New routes to benefit Bhutanese industrialists

Bhutanese industrialists and traders will have more options of travel route with the construction of new additional trade routes with India along West Bengal and Assam borders.

To facilitate trade between India and Bhutan, the Indian government is looking into possibilities of opening new routes from Manglabari (West Bengal) to Toribari (near Pasakha industrial estate), Phuentsholing, and Bokajuli under Daranga, Assam, to Phuentsho-Rabtenling industrial estate (Matanga) in Samdrup Jongkhar.

According to the Consul General of India in Phuentsholing, A. Nataranjan, the proposal to open new trade routes between Bhutan and India came from the Royal Government of Bhutan and it has been forwarded to the Indian government.



"The proposal is under consideration and hopefully the proposed new routes will be opened soon to enhance smooth trade between the two countries," said the consul general. He said that not only will the new routes enhance the increasing trade and commercial activities between India and Bhutan, it will also help decongest traffic and pollution in these locations.

The length of the present route from Phuentsholing gate to Pasakha Industrial area is about 17 kilometers (Kms) and from Mangalabari to Phuentsholing gate just about four kms. This 21 km-long route will be reduced by six kms by the new proposed alignment.

Similarly, the present route from Daranga to Matanga industrial estate in Samdrup Jongkhar, which is about

20 kilometers could be reduced by 300 meters which is almost thirteen times lesser if an alternative road is constructed from Daranga highway to Matanga industrial estate, said the consul general. Bhutanese industrialists say the new route would help them in reducing transportation cost and time for reaching machinery equipment and other materials.

In addition, the new route will also ease the transportation of heavy machineries as most trailers faced difficulties while traveling uphill between Phuentsholing and Rinchending.

The Bhutanese government identified these areas for additional trade routes and the request to the government of India was made in July, 2009.

The last trade route that became operational between India and Bhutan was Dawki route which connects Bangladesh. The route passing through Meghalaya to Bangladesh was official opened early this year.

Meanwhile, the survey work on the 18 kilometer railway track from Hashimara to Toribari under Nehru Golden Jubilee project has been temporarily suspended despite having completed half of the works. "For the time being, we have to stop the survey work due to some objections being raised by affected tea garden owners on the Indian side," said the Consul General.

He said the government of India is in the process of persuading the affected tea garden owners so as to resume survey and further works on this project. According to the report, tentatively, the railway line will start from Hashimara in West Bengal and go through Satali, Bharna Bari and Dalsingpara to Toribari.

The estimated budget is expected to be more than Nu 2.7 billion for the railway construction. The railway link is expected to connect Bhutan to the entire railway network of India.

Sri Lanka to empower local industrialists

President Mahinda Rajapakse has directed the officials of the Ministry of Industrial Development to empower local industrialists. They should be provided with necessary guidance and technical support to compete with international industrial market, he said.

Sri Lankan industrialists and craftsmen have managed to uplift Sri Lanka in to an international level in many sectors. Time has come to create a revolution in Sri Lanka's industrial sector by utilizing local resources and traditional know-how. The president made these observations at the progress review meeting of the ministry of traditional industries and small scale entrepreneur development held in Temple Trees.

The President further said that problems pertaining to small scale industrialists will soon be solved. Local crafts production centres should be developed by providing necessary facilities. The Sri Lankan President stressed the need to set up arts and crafts production centers in the northern and eastern provinces as well.

Humanitarian space easing in Afghanistan

Humanitarian agencies are seeing promising signs of regaining space and acceptance from Taliban insurgents while attacks against NGO workers have reduced significantly over the past six months.

Up to 1,200 security incidents were recorded in June - more than in any month since the fall of the Taliban - but attacks on NGOs by armed opposition groups in the first half of 2010 were 35 percent lower than in 2008-2009, according to the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO).

ANSO, which provides free safety analysis and advice to member NGOs, said attacks on NGOs had diminished due to their own enhanced security measures, and also because the insurgents appear to have stopped targeting NGOs.

"At a strategic level the armed opposition are in many cases acting more like a government in waiting and so see a convergence of interests in maintaining NGO services. However, it is still possible for mistakes to be made at the tactical level and for an NGO to become targeted," Nic Lee, director of ANSO, told IRIN.

Unlike previous years when the armed opposition abducted aid workers and held them for 6-8 weeks, only releasing them in exchange for money or prisoners, this year the detention period has dropped to 6-8 days; abductees have been released quickly and often unconditionally, ANSO said.

Empowering SMEs a challenge, says Lanka

Entrepreneurship is widely seen as a prerequisite for economic development and today businesses are challenged due to stiff competition, rapid development of new technologies and globalization, Deputy Finance Minister Dr. Sarath Amunugama said. Speaking at the inauguration of the training programme on 'Entrepreneurship Development using the Blue Ocean strategy' organized by the Colombo Plan, the Deputy Finance Minister said global growth is driven by India and China by developing SMEs.

Empowering SMEs is a big issue in Asia today. Majority of the first 500 companies in India were small entrepreneurs who had skills. Therefore entrepreneurship does not mean only big business.

There are millions of people involved in small businesses and they are the backbone of the economy of the country, Dr. Amunugama said.

He said that the so called 'Indu rate' of growth of 2 percent is over and India is achieving a double digit growth now, similarly Sri Lanka has an ambitious target to gain high GDP growth.

Islamic banking only answer to prosperity: Pak bankers

Speakers at a forum in Karachi have underlined the need for promoting awareness on Islamic banking especially among the business community so that we have Islamic economy guaranteeing high rate of development and prosperity in Pakistan.

The Islam strictly prohibits Riba (interest) in any mode of transaction. Any one linked to a transaction based on interest is declared 'Jehanami' by the Holy Quraan whether he /she is benefitted from the deal or not, they said. The forum was organized by Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry's sub-committee on banking and insurance at the Chamber.

Additional Director, State Bank of Pakistan's Banking Policy and Regulations departments, Mahmood Shafqat emphasized on creating awareness about Islamic banking and clearance of misconceptions about it. He expressed satisfaction over the growth of Islamic banking in the country which is 16 percent despite global financial crisis.

He claimed that shariah compliance mechanism introduced by SBP is unique in the world. SBP has its own Shariah Board and all banks have been bound to appoint at least one Shariah Advisor who must be very qualified Islamic scholar. The Central Bank regularly pursues banks to be shariah compliant.

He said under Islamic system of economy the amounts we spend to achieve pleasure/blessings from God are the only savings. We will get 700 per cent return on such spending (sadaqat) as promised in the Quraan, he asserted.

Sohail Khan, Head of Marketing and Training, Meezan Bank in his presentation said Riba is greater sin than Zina and eating flesh of pig. He said we being the Muslims would have to change our attitude. He said Islamic banking works on the basis of trade whereas the conventional banking on riba (interest).

President KCCI Abdul Majid Haji Muhammad, Vice President KCCI M. Jawed Vohra, Chairman KCCI sub-committee on banking and insurance Attique-ur-Rehman assured that the Chamber would play very active role in promoting of Islamic banking among its more than 16,000 members.

China 2009 economy grows by 9.1pc

China said its red-hot economy had expanded by 9.1 per cent in 2009 in an upward revision that narrows the gap even further with the world's number two economy Japan.

The revision by the national statistics bureau from an earlier figure of 8.7 per cent came ahead of second-quarter data due this month that is expected to show the world's third-largest economy slowed in the three months to June.

The country's nominal gross domestic product hit 34.0507 trillion yuan in 2009, which based on the central bank's average yuan-dollar exchange rate for the year equals \$4.98 trillion.

However even with the revision, Japan retains its place as the world's second-largest economy. It posted nominal GDP of around \$5.07 trillion last year, based on the average dollar-yen exchange rate for 2009, according to data released in June.

The new growth figure is a result of an upward revision of contributions by China's secondary and tertiary industries to last year's GDP, the National Bureau of Statistics said on its web site.

The growth rate was well above the government's target of eight per cent for the full year, a level seen as crucial for fostering job creation and staving off social unrest among China's urbanising 1.3-billion-strong population.

China powered out of the global financial crisis last year on the back of a government stimulus package worth four trillion yuan (\$586 billion), which saw massive investment in highways, bridges and other infrastructure.

'We think the impact of the stimulus package was greater than what was reported,' said Erwin Sanft, an economist at BNP Paribas in Hong Kong. 'Therefore an upward revision doesn't surprise us.'

Royal Bank of Canada senior analyst Brian Jackson said the new figure would have little impact on this year's growth rate. This revision shows China's out-performance last year was even more impressive than it first appeared, but it doesn't have major implications for how fast it will grow this year,' Jackson said.

After returning to double-digit growth of 10.7 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009, China's economy accelerated to 11.9 per cent in the first quarter of this year, fuelling fears the economy was at risk of overheating.

Worried an explosion in bad debts could derail the economic surge, Beijing announced a series of measures to rein in bank lending and speculative property investment to avoid a real estate bubble.

Most economists think the economy slowed in the second quarter due to these tightening measures and a slowdown in manufacturing activity. Royal Bank of Scotland economist Ben Simpfendorfer has forecast 11.1 per cent growth in the second quarter.

Premier Wen Jiabao said the economy was 'developing in the expected direction', suggesting recent tightening moves would remain in place despite signs of a slowdown.

Chinese sovereign credit report rates US below China

A Chinese rating agency warned that developed countries like the United States faced 'big problems' after issuing what it called the first sovereign credit risk report by a non-Western agency. The report, launched by Dagong Global Credit Rating Co Ltd, rated US sovereign debt as more risky than China's.

'We found the economic fundamentals in the major economies had big problems given that growth in their economy and fiscal income were negative while their debts were growing rapidly,' chairman Guan Jianzhong told AFP. 'Moreover, the factors that could enable them to change the fundamentals are not very evident in the foreseeable future,' he said. The report came as China is seeking more influence over world economic policy.

Beijing has repeatedly called for an alternative to the Western agencies, which were blamed for underestimating credit risks that led to the global financial crisis in 2008.

At last month's G20 summit in Toronto, Chinese president Hu Jintao urged 'an objective, fair, reasonable and uniform method and standard for sovereign credit ratings' that can better reflect a country's economic strength.

China overtakes India in Asia-Pacific outsourcing business

Aided by low labour costs, China has overtaken India as the primary destination of outsourcing and shared services for Asia-Pacific companies-netting business to the tune of \$20 billion, according to accounting firm KPMG.

The KPMG survey, which covered 280 senior company executives across Asia, showed that China's outsourcing and shared services are rapidly expanding-winning a substantial market share over India and other regional destinations.

'Though, at the moment, the country has still not reached the level of maturity seen in India, the growth of China's outsourcing market is significant. Many Western companies may still see India as their location

of choice, but for executives within Asia Pacific the message is clear—China is now leading the way,' said Edge Zarrella, global head, IT Advisory, KPMG China, was quoted as saying in the official media.

According to the survey, 42 per cent of the respondents said their companies have set up one of their shared services centres in China. As many as 41 per cent said they have a third-party outsourcing provider in China. Singapore stands second as a popular location for shared services at 29 per cent, followed by India at 25 per cent.

Figures from KPMG show that in 2007, China's onshore and offshore outsourcing market stood at only \$7.5 billion. That amount nearly tripled to \$20 billion last year, according to the ministry of commerce. KPMG predicts that China's total outsourcing market will stand at \$43.9 billion by 2014.

Shared services are also expanding rapidly in China. The survey found that over 80 per cent senior executives employ an outsourcing strategy, shared services, or a combination of the two.

Low labour costs was one of the main reasons for China's growth in the outsourcing business, the survey said, adding that 51 per cent of the respondents said it was the main criterion for making their decision. The key factors used for determining the location of their shared services centre are low labour cost and language capabilities (53 per cent each), the KPMG said.

However, Alan Fung, partner of performance and technology, KPMG China, said that senior executives should think twice before making their location choices based solely on the cost factor. 'They should take into consideration the long-term needs of their business...' he said, adding that language, skills and infrastructure are all critical.

China raising gas reserves, to cut imports

China is aggressively developing its own massive gas reserves, which will lead to imported gas requirements falling dramatically, a newspaper reported.

The country will need much less liquefied natural gas from 2020 onwards than in the coming decade, said the Financial Times, citing a study by industry consultant Wood Mackenzie. And it will need no additional gas transported by pipeline after 2020, added the paper.

'Beyond 2020 we expect to see significant volumes of indigenous unconventional gas entering the market and meeting much of China's incremental demand,' said the study. The news could come as a blow to international energy companies - such as BG, Royal Dutch Shell, BP and ExxonMobil - who are looking to China to grow their LNG business. China is looking at various new sources, including shale gas and producing gas from coal, said the FT.

Japan's business confidence highest in two years

Japanese business confidence has reached its highest level in two years, as the world's number two economy continues to recover from its worst slump in decades, the Bank of Japan said.

The index of sentiment among major manufacturers rose for a fifth straight quarter to one point in June from minus 14 in March, according to the central bank's closely watched Tankan survey of more than 11,000 firms.

The reading means that optimists outweigh pessimists among major manufacturers in terms of their view of Japan's economic climate for the first time since June 2008, beating analyst forecasts of a reading of minus 4.

The June survey signals an increasingly upbeat mood, with companies predicting surging profits while planning to raise spending on plants and equipment, likely boosting an economy struggling for sustainable growth.

The data will be welcomed by prime minister Naoto Kan's government ahead of elections this month as it puts fiscal discipline at the core of its agenda to repair Japan's tattered finances and slash the world's biggest public debt.

Exports have driven the country's recovery from recession but recent data showed the domestic picture remains weak, with unemployment surprising economists by edging higher in May to 5.2 per cent, missing expectations.

Crippling deflation and weak domestic demand continue to weigh on growth as consumers defer purchases in the hope of further price falls. The government has said it aims to end deflation by fiscal 2011. However, the latest data will boost hopes that Japan can cultivate a self-sustaining recovery, analysts say.

Large manufacturers and non-manufacturers plan to boost capital spending by 4.4 per cent in the fiscal year that began in April, better than the 0.4 per cent decline forecast in March and a revised 17 per cent cut in the previous year.

Major manufacturers meanwhile forecast a 161 per cent surge in pre-tax earnings for the current financial year, after a revised 16.6 per cent rise last year. Together, Japan's large manufacturers and non-manufacturers eye a 68.1 per cent rise in profits in the current year.

The index, which measures the percentage of firms that think business conditions are good minus those that believe they are bad, hit a record low of minus 58 in March 2009.

Japan to launch social business hub of Asia in Fukuoka City

Japan is going to launch a social business hub of Asia in Fukuoka City in Kyushu Island. Mayor of Fukuoka Hiroshi Yoshida on Friday signed a joint declaration with Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, the founder and managing director of Grameen Bank, says a press release from Yunus Centre.

Chairman of Kyushu Railways Susumi Ishihara and president of Kyushu University Setuo Arikawa were present during the signing ceremony in Fukuoka, Japan.

The hub will promote social business, a concept developed by Yunus, as a means of tackling social problems in Japan and all over Asia.

As a beginning, mayor Yoshida announced that he will undertake the first social business in the city on behalf of the city government aiming at creating employment for difficult-to-employ young people of the city. If this is successful he will undertake social businesses in other fields.

The declaration read: 'We hereby jointly declare that in order to solve many predominant social problems in Japan and in the world, we will promote social businesses by establishing a social business hub in Asia with the cooperation of Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Creative Lab based on the seven principles on this day of sixteenth of July 2010, in Fukuoka, Japan.'

Fukuoka is the home of Kyushu University and has cooperation with Grameen in Bangladesh to work on technological innovation to solve problems of the poor in Bangladesh since 2007. It has also established a Grameen Creative Lab, which will promote the concept and practice of social business in Japan and beyond, based on the 7 principles of social business defined by Yunus.

The signing of a landmark agreement between Grameen and Japanese retail giant Uniqlo to create a social business in textiles in Bangladesh on July 13 marked a significant milestone in this regard.

Deflation main threat to Japan economy

Stubborn deflation and low demand from an ageing population prone to tight-fistedness spell a difficult future for Japan's economy, the government warned in an annual report.

Falling prices have been at the core of the lacklustre performance of the world's number two economy over the past two decades, said the Cabinet Office in its Annual Report on the Japanese Economy and Public Finances.

Japan has been hit by repeated bouts of deflation since an asset price collapse in the early 1990s that ended the

country's economic boom, later compounded by the 2008-2009 global financial crisis.

The report said Japan was now alone among leading industrialised economies in suffering from notable deflation, which slows the economy as consumers put off purchases in anticipation of future price falls.

While Japan's economy has gradually been recovering from a bruising recession since last spring thanks to improved exports and government stimulus, the rebound is still hampered by deflation, the report said.

The Cabinet Office economic 'white paper' traces the roots of Japan's deflation to 'the negative legacies of the bubble economy', such as bad loans and excessive debt, which dried up funds flows and slowed growth.

Japan's heavy reliance on growth through exports has also aggravated deflation as companies facing tough competition have increasingly had to move production overseas, where labour and other costs are lower, the report said.

The report urged the government to boost domestic demand and jobs through promoting potential high-growth sectors such as health care and green technology, echoing the strategy of prime minister Naoto Kan.

'It is important to continue efforts to restructure public finances even if it's at a slow pace,' the report added, referring to Japan's mountain of public debt, which is nearing 200 per cent of gross domestic product.

The government last November announced for the first time in nearly three and a half years that Asia's biggest economy was again in deflation. It marked the first period of falling prices since March 2001-June 2006.

Malaysian exports jump 21.9pc

Malaysia said its exports, the mainstay of the economy, had jumped 21.9 per cent year-on-year in May due to stronger demand for electronic goods.

The trade ministry said in a statement that shipments had risen to 52.3 billion ringgit (\$16.2 billion), while imports were up 34.2 per cent at 44.15 billion ringgit, producing a surplus of 8.14 billion ringgit.

The increase was due to higher exports of electrical and electronic products, liquefied natural gas, crude petroleum, chemical products and palm oil, among others. Electrical and electronic items account for more than a third of Malaysia's total exports to markets such as Singapore, China, Japan, the United States and Thailand.

Export-dependent Malaysia, Southeast Asia's third-largest economy, was hit hard by the global slowdown and its economy shrank 1.7 per cent last year.

The economy is forecast to grow 5.5 per cent this year, but prime minister Najib Razak said last month he was aiming for six per cent this year, as he unveiled a 69-billion-dollar development plan aimed at spurring growth.

Malaysia also expects exports to grow between six and seven per cent this year as demand improves. Exports dipped 16.6 per cent in 2009.

Malaysia cuts subsidies in surprise move

Malaysia surprisingly hiked fuel and sugar prices to reduce expensive subsidies, a controversial move that will save the government more than \$230 million this year alone.

But the decision could have serious political repercussions for prime minister Najib Razak and it could spark a rise in prices of other goods and services, analysts said.

The government defended the subsidy cut, saying it was important to achieve its development goals and promote healthier lifestyles. 'The government has made a difficult, but bold decision,' it said in a statement.

'By choosing to implement these modest subsidy reforms, we have taken a crucial step in the right direction towards meeting our commitment to reduce the fiscal deficit, without overburdening the Malaysian people.'

The cuts will save 750 million ringgit, or \$234.4 million, this year. Malaysia will still be spending 7.82 billion ringgit from now till the end of the year on subsidies for fuel and sugar.

'These measures are a demonstration of our fiscal responsibility. They will enhance Malaysia's financial stability, while also protecting the people,' the government said.

Malaysia had a budget deficit of seven per cent of gross domestic product in 2009, which it aims to narrow to 5.3 per cent this year.

Khoo Kay Peng, a political analyst, said the move had caught consumers by surprise. 'The way it was announced has made many people unhappy,' he said.

'It will translate into votes against the government. Something is totally wrong with this government. The opposition will exploit and attack the government on this issue,' he said.

The opposition scored unprecedented gains in elections in 2008 which saw it claim five states and a third of parliamentary seats. The next election is not officially due until 2013 but pundits say it could be held next year.

Malaysia's auto sales to hit record high

Malaysia's auto sales rose 19.8 percent in the first half of 2010 and are tipped to hit a record high this year in Southeast Asia's biggest passenger car market, an industry group said. The Malaysian Automotive Association (MAA) revised its 2010 sales forecast for 2010 to 570,000 units, from 550,000 units estimated previously, as the nation's economy recovers.

"Positive consumers' sentiment is expected to continue owing to greater stability in the employment market," the MAA said in a statement. The association said sales for January to June stood at 301,077 units, compared to 251,305 units sold in the same period in 2009.

Local carmaker Perodua led the sales with a 31.5 percent market share, followed by national carmaker Proton with 26.6 percent while Japanese auto giant Toyota came in third with 14.8 percent.

The MAA said it was optimistic the industry would break an all-time record of 552,316 units sold in 2005. "The new forecast (of 570,000 units) will definitely be achieved," MAA president Aishah Ahmad said, according to Dow Jones Newswires.

Myanmar strives for meeting domestic gas demand

Myanmar has laid a 24-inch natural gas pipeline, transmitting gas produced from the Yadana gas field in Mottama offshore area to gas distribution camp of Ywama in Yangon to be further distributed for domestic use since mid-June.

It is believed that with the availability of the transmitted gas, gas-run power plants will be able to generate more electricity to satisfy the demand of Yangon residents, said the official daily New Light of Myanmar.

In Myanmar, energy demand is high as construction and infrastructure development tasks are booming. In addition to above-ground resources, Myanmar is also blessed with rich underground resources including oil and gas.

There were 19 onshore oil and gas fields before 1988 but the number had reached 31 after 1988. Many more new onshore and offshore oil and gas fields were found one after another over the past more than 20 years.

According to the geological condition, Myanmar has 14 geological valleys in the onshore regions, among which the state-run Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) has conducted surveys in the central region, Pyay and Delta regions. It was reported that there remain many more promising regions for exploitation of oil and gas in the country.

Export drop hits Vietnam rice farmers

Over-production and lower exports have left rice farmers in Vietnam's Mekong Delta holding on to their stocks in the face of lower prices, analysts say.

Vietnam is the world's second-largest exporter of rice and the Delta accounts for more than half of the country's production. But surpluses, the beginning of the wet season, and a shortage of places for drying wet rice are adding up to heavy potential losses, says Vo Tong Xuan, an internationally-recognised rice expert. He fears Vietnam will lose one million tonnes of the grain this season.

The country hopes to sell about six million tonnes on the international market in 2010, a figure similar to last year's, but shipments fell in the first half. Between January and June Vietnam exported more than three million tonnes, down 8.76 per cent on the same period a year earlier, according to official statistics.

Export value for the period fell only 1.32 per cent, which Xuan said indicates that shippers received a good price. The farmers, however, did not fully benefit from those proceeds.



Xuan, based in the Delta province of An Giang, said farmers may have over-produced this year on an expectation of earnings after state-owned VinaFood assured them the Philippines would buy in bulk.

But the Philippines had not yet confirmed all its purchases, Xuan said, while other buyers like those in Europe were betting on fresh falls in the price and delaying their orders.

Le Van Banh, director of the Mekong Delta Rice Research Institute, notes that competition from other exporters including India and Pakistan leaves less room for Vietnamese grain abroad, while at home 'we have an abundance of rice so the prices are relatively low.'

Bags of rice piled on the porch of Dang Thi Bay's house in Tien Giang province symbolise the problem. With prices down she is not rushing to sell her 15 tonnes of stock. 'If we take into account the fertiliser price and the costs of production, selling now would bring a loss. It is too cheap,' says the mother of five.

'We're waiting for the price to go up, but don't know how long that will be,' Bay says at her home in Phu Nhuan commune. For one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of paddy - unmilled rice - she can get between 3,200 and 3,300 dong (about 18 cents) from a local processor. That is a drop from 4,000 to 4,200 dong last year.

Bay has started growing a new crop and says she can keep her current stock for two months before rainy-season humidity could take its toll. She fears losing her harvest.

To help farmers, the government has announced preferential loans to local businesses for buying up to one million tonnes of rice. They have been asked to purchase one kilogram at a minimum price of 3,500 dong, according to Vietnamese media.

In Phu Nhuan, just down the road from Bay's house, Ngo Thi Thanh Thuy works in a family trading business, buying paddy from neighbouring farmers, milling it and selling to markets.

'We are still buying because certain families in difficult situations keep selling, but we are having problems reselling it,' she said. In normal times the paddy is milled in the morning and resold in the afternoon but lately four or five days pass before the business can resell.

Xuan, the professor, says too many farmers plant three crops of rice annually. He would like to see lower production in the Delta to assure them better prices. 'It's very easy to ramp up production but difficult to increase (their) revenues,' he said.

Taiwan wins trade dispute with EU

Taiwan has reportedly won a trade dispute with the European Union over a tariff imposed on LCD panels, a victory that may help Taiwan manufacturers save as much as NT\$19.6 billion (US\$611.5 million) a year.

The case was launched jointly by Taiwan, Japan and the United States to the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO), with Taiwan suing EU over a 14-per cent tariff imposed on LCD panels. This marked the first case Taiwan has brought to the WTO ever since its accession into the world trade body eight years ago.

Abu Dhabi reluctant to invest in BP

Abu Dhabi is reluctant to invest in BP, a report said, only days after the British company's chief was thought to have sought investment from sovereign wealth funds on a visit to the Gulf state.

Citing sources, the Middle East Economic Survey said it "understands that Abu Dhabi has signaled a reluctance to buy into BP," in its latest edition.

"Sources close to Abu Dhabi investment funds said that they are already in court over a Citigroup investment and that the move would be too politically charged and there are too many unknowns," the MEES newsletter said.

Abu Dhabi Investment Authority became one of Citigroup's biggest investors in 2007 with a 7.5-billion-dollar cash injection, but The National newspaper reported in December that ADIA filed a suit accusing the US bank of fraud.

World's first Ferrari park

A year after its first Formula One race, Abu Dhabi hopes to lure even more tourists with 'Ferrari World' - a grandiose theme park that is the first of its kind for the iconic Italian carmaker.

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi announced, the park will open in 100 days featuring a record-breaking roller coaster ride meant to emulate the feeling of being in a Ferrari F1 car.

Sitting next to the futuristic Yas Marina circuit that hosted Abu Dhabi's inaugural Grand Prix race in November 2009, the sprawling complex will be the world's largest indoor theme park.

Due to open on October 28, little more than two weeks before this year's Abu Dhabi GP, it will be housed under a massive triangular red roof on the \$40-billion Yas Island development.

'It is an indoor thing with an outdoor feeling,' said Claus Frimand, the general manager of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

'You forget that you are inside a building because the roof is between 35 and 50 metres (115 and 165 feet) above you and there are no support structures, except the funnel in the middle and one row of columns,' he added.

Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates capital, hopes the park will help to draw tourists from around the globe along with several other ambitious projects including state-of-the-art branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim museums.

Ferrari World spreads over 86,000 square metres (925,696 square feet), while the red roof bearing the world's largest logo of Ferrari's prancing horse stretches over 200,000 square metres (2.15 million square feet).

Among its 20 attractions are two roller coasters, including the F1-themed Formula Rossa which is set to be the fastest ever reaching a top speed of 240 kilometres (150 miles) per hour. 'It gives you the feel of driving in a F1 car very close to the ground,' said park manager Andy Keeling.

The second of the roller coasters, which stretch beyond the building's perimeter, features two tracks with Ferrari-shaped trains.

'The unique feature is that it has two tracks, two trains side by side and depending on the weight of the passengers, one will cross the finish line first,' said Frimand. Right in the centre of the building, out of a big funnel which is the only area with daylight, visitors can experience the space-shot G-force Tower.

'That is the highest we could build on the island,' said Frimand. 'We can shoot people up through the roof where they can look over the whole island. 'It gives you the G-force that the drivers are experiencing during the race,' he added.

Elsewhere, a Ferrari California Spyder convertible takes visitors through Bell'Italia, a reproduction of the Italian countryside with model villages and tourist highlights like the lagoon of Venice, the Colosseum, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

A large replica of the Maranello factory demonstrates the manufacturing process from the design stage to the finished product. Motoring enthusiasts will even be able to experience the inside of a Ferrari V12 engine in another ride.

Arab countries for joint action to deal with water issues

Water officials from Arab countries met in Cairo to discuss the ways to deal with water issues facing these countries.

It is of great importance to achieve a united, coordinated view among Arab countries over water issues and the use of new desalination technologies to meet the increasing Arab water demand, said Arab League secretary general Amr Moussa at a meeting of Arab water ministers in Cairo at the LA headquarters.

The meeting, co-chaired by Jordanian water resources minister Mohammad Najjar, called for a comprehensive Arab water security strategy to face the problem of water dearth in the Arab world.

'The Arab states should consider the new technological means in desalinating sea water, particularly the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the process of desalination,' said Moussa.

'These technologies should be also applied to electricity generation and many other fields,' he added. The Arab world is lagging in that regard and some of its nations are denied access to these crucial resources in generating energy and desalination of sea water, he said.

The AL chief also called for mutual understanding among Nile River nations over a row on water-sharing rights of the river. Egypt and Sudan, two downstream countries, have been boycotting a new cooperation framework on Nile water, which has been signed by five upstream countries in mid-May.

After the session, Najjar told reporters the Arab countries must adopt a water security strategy and clear, applicable policies, particularly in the light of challenges such as climate change and regional conflicts affecting water rights.

It is quite known that approximately 70 per cent of the renewable water resources in the Arab world comes from outside the borders of the Arab world, and thus most of Arab countries are downstream countries rather than upstream ones, according to Najjar.

In addition to climate change and the decline in the Arab citizens' annual share of renewable water, currently 19 Arab countries are below the water poverty line amid a shortage of rainfall in the region, said the official.

Iraqi water resources minister Abdul Latif Rashid called upon the Arab League to help Iraq to deal with the challenges posed by the dearth of its water resources.

Iraq has been suffering a shortage of water over the past few years as a result of lack of rain and snow as well as the use of water by some upstream and neighbouring countries, according to the Iraqi official.

The Arab water ministers urged their governments to take actions to protect Arab water rights. According to a UN report, almost 300 million people in the Mediterranean region will face water shortages by 2025 as a result of climate change.

Tehran bazaar shuts down in tax row with government

Traders in Tehran's grand bazaar went on strike in protest at increased income taxes in a year of slow business, ISNA news agency reported.

'This morning most businesses including jewellery and fabric shops shut down to protest at a lack of agreement with the tax office' over taxes of the previous Iranian year, which ended March 21, ISNA said.

Such strikes are rare in Tehran's traditional trade hub where bazaar merchants are a powerful business group.

In October 2008 they went on a week-long strike over a newly introduced value added tax and returned to work only after the government backed down.

'You cannot ignore recession when newspaper headlines say there are bounced cheques of four billion dollars,' complained Mohammad Tahan-pour, who heads the union of home appliance traders.

He said many shops were shutting down because traders could no longer afford the rent, yet 'the tax office is using a language of force and pressuring business owners.'

He said in some cases the government was demanding 2.5 times more in annual income taxes in comparison with previous years.

Iran's economy is heavily dependent on oil exports and the government of president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who first came to power in 2005, enjoyed windfall revenues before the oil prices fell last year amid a global financial crisis.

The hardliner's economic policy is the core of criticism against his government and opposition leaders continue to challenge his legitimacy, insisting his June 2009 re-election was massively rigged.

\$46b being invested in refineries

Iran is investing \$46b in building new oil refineries and upgrading its existing facilities, Deputy Oil Minister Allreza Zeighami said in a report posted on the ministry's website.

The official said more than half of this investment, around \$26 billion, is solely for building new refineries by the end of the current development plan to 2014, the website shana.ir reported. Of the \$26 billion, about \$8.5 billion has already been disbursed, the report said.

Iran, the second largest oil exporter in OPEC, relies heavily on imports for petroleum products, especially gasoline due to inadequate refining capacity. It imports nearly 40 percent of its annual gasoline needs.

The United States and European Union are specifically targeting the oil sector in sanctions they are imposing on Iran, on top of measures imposed by the UN Security Council over its controversial nuclear programme.

EU foreign ministers were meeting in Brussels to slap the tough sanctions on Iran's oil sector in a bid to coax Tehran back to nuclear negotiations.

Lebanon unveils \$5bn plan to overhaul power sector

Lebanon has unveiled an ambitious \$5 billion plan to overhaul its decaying power sector and provide it with 24-hour electricity in four years. Lebanon's electricity sector is saddled with old power plants, insufficient infrastructure and inefficient supply lines. The loss-making sector adds \$1.5 billion to the budget deficit annually, and the cost to the wider economy from poor power supply is at least \$2.5 billion, according to government figures.

Energy Minister Gebran Bassil said the plan calls for the production of 4,000 megawatts of electricity by 2014 at a total cost of \$4.87 billion. The government will provide \$1.5 billion, the private sector \$2.32 billion and international donors will contribute \$1 billion. The state-owned Electricite du Liban (EdL) can only meet two-thirds of peak demand of 1,650 megawatts, which means the average supply of electricity per day is 18 hours.

Central Beirut, where the majority of businesses and banks are located, faces daily power cuts of three hours while greater Beirut and towns and cities further away experience longer cuts, some up to 9 hours. Homes and businesses are forced to depend on power generators, adding extra electricity costs. Lebanese across the country have held protests, blocking roads with burning tyres, to demand a solution to the problem, especially with high summer temperatures approaching.

Between 1992-2009 only \$1.6 billion had been invested in the sector. "The time for negotiations should now be behind us, and we should start with implementing the plan. And I hope we start working, that we don't go back to pointless negotiations that people have no patience for anymore," Bassil said in Beirut.

The plan envisages building pipelines for transporting natural gas along the coast, an LNG terminal and upgrading power plants or building new ones in more accessible areas. Bassil said Turkey was ready to provide natural gas and Russia and the CIS countries were other supply options. An LNG terminal would allow producers such as Qatar and Algeria to provide liquefied natural gas carried on tankers.

Bassil said part of the funding would come from donations made at an international conference in 2007 after the Hezbollah-Israeli war a year earlier. In some of Lebanon's power plants the production cost of electricity is 22 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh), while tariffs stand at 9.6 cents per kWh. Bassil said there was no plan to

increase tariffs for the moment until the sector was fully revitalized, but that there would be gradual increase in conjunction with improvements in the service.

In 2009, consumers paid about \$700 million to EdL and \$1.4 billion to use of generators. In 2010, Bassil expected payments to EdL to total \$800 million and \$1.76 billion to generators. "You can't live in your home with no generator. The President and Prime Minister cannot live in their palace with no generator. So we can't go and increase the tariff, without decreasing the extra cost the Lebanese citizen has to pay.

A key component of the plan was to revamp EdL, a state-owned, crumbling entity which is a massive burden on state finances, partly through outsourcing. The average age of an employee at EdL is 52 and many of the 2,000 "contractual and daily" workers the firm employs are "political appointees and unqualified workers".

The challenge is in implementing the plan. If we don't translate it to people into 'there will be electricity 24/24' then in the end we won't have achieved anything," Bassil said. "If there's one minute of power cuts, then I say that the electricity problem in Lebanon has not been solved," Bassil said shortly after-in a sign of the long road ahead-the lights went out in the auditorium. Iran to produce 100 million tons of petrochemical products by 2016

Iran has announced that it plans to boost the annual production of petrochemicals to 100mln tons by March 2016 through implementation of 70 projects.

Managing Director of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) of Iran Gholam-Hossein Bayat announced the country's plans on the increase in the annual NPC products that would reach 100 million tons at the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1394 (March 20, 2016).

Addressing a number of NPC staff members, Bayat said 70 projects are planned to be implemented in order to achieve that goal.

He further called for construction of new petrochemical complexes to match the increase of gas production in the South Pars gas fields.

The National Petrochemical Company touched 34.4 million tons of products last year, the NPC chief said.

If there was any problem, the NPC would be capable of producing 17 billion liters of gasoline per day, Bayat further said.

World trade to grow to 10pc in 2010: WTO

The World Trade Organisation raised its forecast for growth of global commerce to 10 per cent this year, with its director general saying that even this might yet 'turn out to be too low.'

WTO chief Pascal Lamy said: 'Our forecast for world trade this year is plus 10 per cent in volume after the minus 12 (per cent) we registered in '09.'

Lamy was speaking to reporters, at the launch of the trade body's annual report on the sidelines of the Shanghai World Expo.

In a separate speech at Shanghai's Institute of Foreign Trade, the WTO's director general said that after last year's dramatic slump, 'trade growth is coming back fast, thanks in no small measure to the continuing dynamism of China and the others.'

'Unless there are unanticipated negative economic impacts in the second half of 2010, this estimate (of 10 per cent) may even turn out to be too low,' he added.

The WTO's latest forecast marks a rise from the 9.5 per cent issued in March. The secretariat had warned then that the figure could prove too optimistic as markets were at that point unsettled by Europe's sovereign debt crisis.

In the trade body's annual trade report, the WTO focused on the issue of trade in natural resources. It called for greater global cooperation on such trade, warning that a failure to work together could spark new tensions.

'I believe not only that there is room for mutually beneficial negotiating trade-offs that encompass natural resources trade, but also that a failure to address these issues could be a recipe for growing tension in international trade relations,' said Lamy in the report.

The value of world trade in natural resources - including fisheries, fuels, forestry products and mining - reached \$3.7 trillion in 2008, close to a quarter of world merchandise trade.

Trade in such products had surged more than six fold between 1998 and 2008 mainly due to sharp rises in fuel prices, noted the WTO.

Russia topped the list of leading natural resource exporters, with a share of 9.1 per cent in 2008. Saudi Arabia was the next biggest exporters, with a share of 7.6 per cent.

The United States meanwhile is the biggest importer, buying some 15.2 per cent of natural resources traded in 2008. Japan was the next biggest importer with 9.1 per cent and China a close third with 8.6 per cent.

But as natural resources are finite or requires time for natural replenishment, resource-rich countries typically restrict their export volumes through export taxes or quotas, said the WTO.

Such measures help to improve conservation of resources and can help push countries to diversify their exports away from the natural resource sectors.

However, the WTO warned that such trade barriers can be problematic. They can lead to retaliation or rising world prices. Rather, Lamy pushed for 'well designed trade rules' to address environmental protection and management of natural resources.

D-8 calls for market access to rich economies

The seventh D-8 Summit ended in Abuja adopting a 24-point Abuja Declaration with emphasis on market access to major world economies for poverty alleviation and economic uplift.

The Declaration called upon the private sectors to take advantage of liberal investment regimes, skilled manpower and low cost of doing business in the D-8 member countries to expand trade and economic ties.

It reaffirmed the importance of intense private sector involvement in all activities of the group and emphasised on exploring ways of promoting private sector led cooperation and growth among the member states.

The Declaration reaffirmed resolve of the member states to take immediate measures to encourage FDI in the private sectors and stressed establishment of a D-8 investment fund proposed by Iran.

The next D-8 summit will be held in Pakistan in 2012, according to the Declaration adopted at the concluding session of the one-day summit.

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Turkish president Abdullah Gul, host Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan, Egyptian prime minister Ahmed Nazif, Malaysian deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin, Indonesian minister for coordination M Hatta Rajasa and Pakistani commerce minister Makhdoom Mohammad Amin Fahim led their respective countries at the summit.

According to the Declaration, the D-8 members agreed to encourage regular interaction and sharing of information on investment opportunities by the authorities of the D-8 member states with private sector and chambers of commerce to create greater awareness for availing these opportunities.

The D-8 secretariat should develop business forum webpage on its web site to facilitate and engage private sector involvement in D-8 activities and programmes.

Acknowledging the instrumental role of energy in economic growth and development, the declaration reaffirmed the commitment to broaden cooperation in the sector.

It stressed the importance of collaborative efforts on capacity building, transfer of technology, exploration of new energy sources, development of alternative fuels, including renewable sources of energy as well as peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Taking into account the far-reaching consequence of the global financial and economic crisis, the D-8 leaders agreed to scale up cooperation and coordination efforts in relevant international forum to promote common interest within the existing multilateral frameworks.

'We would like to see a meaningful and fair conclusion and negotiations of the Doha development agenda of the WTO,' the Declaration said.

The leaders reiterated their resolve to enhance cooperation to exchange experiences concerning protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers, both within the context of D-8 and in other regional and global processes including in the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Welcoming the ratification of the 'Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the D-8 member states', the declaration said the agreement would give further impetus to increasing and diversifying intra D-8 trade.

It urged the member countries to expedite ratification and operationalisation of D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement and multilateral agreement among D-8 member countries on administrative assistance in customs matters.

The declaration endorsed the reports of 12th and 13th sessions of D-8 council of ministers and welcomed the prioritisation of activities of D-8 roadmap in the areas of trade, agriculture and food security, industrial cooperation and small and medium enterprise, transportation, and energy and minerals.

Recognising the important role that Islamic banking and finance can contribute to enhancing trade and investment in D-8 countries, it urged the member states to foster greater understanding and cooperation in this field.

The declaration welcomed the proposal of the 12th session of the council of ministers to enhance greater socio-culture context through training programme for young diplomats from member countries.

The D-8 leaders approved the 'Kuala Lumpur Initiative to address food security in D-8 countries'. The D-8 member countries endorsed the 'Tehran Declaration on Industrial Cooperation' and underscored the immediate implementation of the provisions of the declaration.

The Abuja Declaration welcomed the outcome of the first D-8 ministerial meeting on Marine and Fisheries and Fertilisers held in Egyptian capital Cairo in April this year. It underscored the need for exploring new ways of broadening and strengthening cooperation in the health sector among the D-8 members.

The leaders reaffirmed that D-8 can contribute regionally and globally to guide collective action towards the achievement of the MDGs. The D-8 leaders expressed appreciation to the Nigerian government, its president and the people for hosting the seventh D-8 summit.

British economic recovery in tatters amid budget cuts

Britain pushed away from recession with 0.3-per cent growth in the first quarter, but is climbing out of a deeper hole than thought and faces a struggle against budget cuts, new data suggests.

Official figures stood by previous estimates that the economy grew by 0.3 per cent in the first three months of the year, building on slight emergence from recession at the end of last year.

But they also showed that the recession, known to have been a record in terms of duration, had been even deeper than calculated previously.

Economists warned that weak 0.3-per cent growth in the three months to March was barely enough to keep up momentum against draconian cuts in public spending by Britain's coalition government.

The recession, which began in the second quarter of 2008 and ended in the third quarter of 2009, slashed 6.4 per cent from British economic output, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

That was sharper than the previous estimate of a dramatic 6.2-per cent contraction in gross domestic product.

The economy had clawed its way out of recession in the fourth quarter of 2009, and expanded by 0.3 per cent in the first three months of 2010, unchanged from the previous estimate, the ONS added.

'The first quarter's delayed national accounts show that the recovery is still estimated to have got off to a fairly slow start at the beginning of the year, with the quarterly rise in GDP left unrevised at 0.3 per cent,' said Capital Economics analyst Vicky Redwood.

She added: 'Overall ... we still doubt that the economy is in a good position to withstand the fiscal squeeze.'

The downbeat data pushed the London stock market lower while the pound dipped against the dollar. Following the data, the FTSE 100 index of leading shares sank 0.40 per cent while sterling slid to \$1.4944.

'The picture remains one of only gradual recovery so far following a record six quarters of deep overall recession through to the third quarter of 2009,' noted IHS Global Insight economist Howard Archer.

'The main message coming from the revised data was that the recession was even deeper than previously reported with GDP falling by 6.4 per cent from peak to trough, rather than by 6.2 per cent.'

He added that the economy would face a bumpy ride over the coming months owing to the combined impact of fiscal tightening, the eurozone debt crisis and weak consumer spending.

'We suspect growth will be both bumpy and gradual over the coming months in the face of serious headwinds, including major fiscal tightening increasingly starting to impact, the problems in the eurozone and serious constraints on consumers,' Archer warned.

Britain's fiscal watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility, forecast last month that GDP would grow by 1.2 per cent this year and 2.3 per cent in 2011, following the coalition government's deficit-slashing emergency budget.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund cut its growth forecasts for Britain.

The IMF forecast that GDP will grow by 1.2 per cent this year, followed by 2.1 per cent in 2011. The new forecasts compared with the previous estimates for expansion of 1.3 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively.

The ONS made a series of other revisions, adding that British economy shrank by 0.1 per cent in 2008 and by 4.9 per cent in 2009.

USA ends duty-free status for Thai, Indian, Brazilian goods

The United States has withdrawn duty-free treatment given under a special programme to certain passenger tires from Thailand, wood flooring from Brazil and gold rope necklaces from India, the government said.

As the products were found to be 'sufficiently competitive' in the United States, their duty-free treatment under the Generalised System of Preferences programme 'will be withdrawn,' a statement by the US trade representative's office said.

The decision was made by US president Barack Obama during an annual review of the GSP programme, created by the US congress more than three decades ago, to allow certain goods of developing countries to be imported into the US duty-free.

In 2009, the United States extended duty-free treatment under the GSP programme to exports worth \$20.3 billion from eligible beneficiary countries, government data showed.

Egypt's request to add frozen beans and frozen mixed vegetables to a list of eligible products was also granted, with the two products to enjoy duty-free benefits on July 1.

In addition, the statement said, president Obama decided to continue providing duty-free treatment to 110 products from 19 beneficiary countries because their imports exceeded the statutory ceilings by only a small amount. The imports of the 110 products were valued at \$613 million last year.

'GSP is central to our trade agenda and critical to developing countries' continued growth and development,' US trade representative Ron Kirk said.

As part of this year's review, the USTR also analysed petitions to withdraw or limit countries' GSP benefits based on various criteria, the USTR said.

The criteria included whether they took steps to afford internationally recognised standards for worker rights, provide key investor protections, including enforcement of arbitral awards, and protect intellectual property rights.

In 2009, the USTR accepted petitions to review whether Sri Lanka met GSP eligibility criteria related to worker rights and whether Argentina met the criteria related to enforcement of arbitral awards.

Countries that remain under review of whether they meet eligibility criteria are Lebanon, Russia and Uzbekistan regarding intellectual property rights protection and Bangladesh, Niger, the Philippines and Uzbekistan on worker rights.

Under the GSP programme, in total, 131 developing countries, including 43 least-developed countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Cambodia, are eligible to export about 5,000 types of products duty-free to the United States.

Work still needed to repair economic damage: Obama

US President Barack Obama admitted the progress he had wrought in turning around the economy was not yet sufficient to repair the "enormous damage" of the worst recession in decades.

But Obama argued in Michigan, on his latest trip to highlight his stimulus plan, that his policies were working, and that the country was heading in the right direction ahead of crucial mid-term congressional elections in November.

"The progress we have made so far is not nearly enough to undo the enormous damage the recession caused," Obama said, at a groundbreaking ceremony for a stimulus-funded plant that will make batteries for hybrid cars.

"As I said since the day I took office, it is going to take time to reverse the toll of the deepest downturn in a generation and I won't be satisfied as long as even one person who needs a job and wants to work can't find one.

"But what is absolutely clear... is that we are headed in the right direction-and that the surest way out of the storms we've been in is to keep moving forward, not to go backward," Obama said. Obama also took a fresh swipe at Republicans, accusing them of wanting to go back to the policies that helped caused the recession.

"I just want to make sure that everybody understands that this country would not be better off if this plant hadn't gotten built," he said.

Obama travelled to Michigan with fears mounting among Democrats that they could lose control of the House of Representatives, and even the Senate in the mid-term polls, a scenario which could severely constrain Obama's power.

Recent opinion surveys have revealed fraying public support for Obama, and rising doubts about his economic management amid fears the rebound is slowing with unemployment still at 9.5 percent.

Obama visited the site of a new plant built by Compact Power Inc., which got part of the 2.4 billion dollars of stimulus funds to encourage firms to build electric batteries for a new generation of vehicles.

The Compact plant will make electric batteries for a new generation of Chevrolet Volt and Ford Focus cars, as Obama seeks to create a new jobs-rich green economy.

Compact Power is a subsidiary of South Korea-based LG Chem Ltd, and the plant will create up to 200 construction jobs and when it is complete will employ 300 workers in Michigan, one of the states worst hit by the recession.

It is the ninth advanced battery factory set up as a under the Recovery Act. The White House says that thanks to Obama's policies, the United States will have the capacity to produce up to 40 percent of the world's batteries by 2015.

Greece to raise more money from the markets

Struggling Greece will try to raise another 1.5 billion euros from the financial markets after a successful sale of bills last week, the state debt management agency said.

"Greece will offer 13-week Treasury bills on July 20 (Tuesday) ... to raise 1.5 billion euros (1.95 billion dollars)," the PDMA said in a statement.

Athens sold 1.625 billion euros in six-month treasury bills at a rate of return of 4.65 percent, only slightly higher than it paid in April, in an operation seen as at least a good first step back to normality.

The government had originally intended to raise 1.25 billion euros from the sale but demand worth 4.546 billion euros allowed it to raise more.

The sale was the first since Greece was rescued from insolvency by a 110-billion-euro (138-billion-dollar) loan package put together by the EU, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund in May.

In return, Athens pledged to put its parlous public finances in order with draconian austerity cuts. The measures have sparked protests in the recession-hit country but the EU said the reforms were on track.

German parliament approves trading curbs

German lawmakers have approved a government bill that would cement in law and extend curbs on speculative trading practices following the country's abrupt imposition of restrictions in May.

The bill - which the government said is aimed at speeding agreement on stronger European rules, but the opposition denounced as ineffective - passed parliament's lower house with the votes of chancellor Angela Merkel's centre-right coalition.

Germany's regulator in May banned so-called naked short-selling of eurozone government debt and major financial stocks, as well as naked credit default swaps involving eurozone debt.

The legislation, which now goes to parliament's upper house, would extend the ban to all stocks traded on German exchanges. The abrupt initial ban rattled financial markets, with analysts saying unilateral action by one government suggested lack of unity in combating the market turmoil from Europe's government debt crisis.

Politicians and many others argue that markets' behaviour worsened Europe's debt crisis. In Germany there have been increasing calls across the political spectrum for tougher regulation.

'I wouldn't call it going it alone, but going ahead,' said Ralph Brinkhaus, a lawmaker with Merkel's Christian Democrats. 'There are situations in which going ahead is necessary; we all saw (at the Group of 20 summit in) Toronto how difficult it is to obtain international consensus.'

Government lawmakers maintained that Germany had helped push forward discussions in Europe. Earlier European Union leaders asked for EU rules to govern naked short-selling and credit default swaps.

Short-selling is a way of betting an asset will go down by borrowing securities and selling them in hopes of buying them cheaper later. Naked short-selling involves selling shares without first borrowing them.

Some market watchers say most such trading is conducted outside Germany. The government has conceded that its move effectively bans naked short-selling only of German and Austrian government debt.

'A ban must have some effect; this ban unfortunately has no effect,' said Manfred Zoellmer of the opposition Social Democrats. The bill, he said, 'is a placebo, it is ineffective and it is purely symbolic politics.'

'Of course it's symbolic politics,' Brinkhaus said. 'Sometimes it's important, alongside facts, also to send signals.' Merkel's government remains under pressure to achieve tougher market regulation.

Finance minister Wolfgang Schaeuble told lawmakers that he would soon join with his French counterpart in calling on the EU's executive commission to draw up proposals for a European financial market transaction tax after calls for a global deal fell flat at the G20.

Airlines need 30,900 new planes by 2029, Boeing forecasts

Airlines will need 30,900 new passenger and freighter jets worth 3.6 trillion dollars by 2029 to meet an increase in global air traffic being led by Asia, US planemaker Boeing forecast.

Publication of the data comes as the aviation industry prepares for the biennial Farnborough airshow near London - a key industry event where new plane orders are expected to be announced.

"We see a total demand of 30,900 aircraft valued at 3.6 trillion dollars" (2.8 trillion euros) by 2029, Boeing marketing chief Randy Tinseth said in London on delivering the aerospace giant's latest 20-year market outlook.

"The largest market in 2009 is for travel within North America followed closely by the Asia Pacific region," said Tinseth, marketing head of Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

"If we look forward 20 years from now based on our growth rates, clearly the landscape of aviation will change ... The Asia Pacific market will clearly be the largest market in the world followed by traffic within North America then Europe." Last year Boeing forecast that airlines would need 29,000 new planes worth 3.22 trillion dollars by 2028.

Boeing also estimated that the world's fleet would almost double to 36,300 planes in 2029 from 18,890 last year, with the majority of new aircraft being single-aisle carriers.

"Demand in the single aisle market is clearly being driven by the growth of low-cost carriers," said Tinseth, adding that China would probably need 4,000 new planes over the next two decades, most of which would be single-aisle.

Boeing said it expected the world economy to grow by an average of 3.2 percent a year by 2029. "The world market is doing much better than last year, but there are still challenges," said Tinseth.

He added that by 2029, almost 43 percent of all airline traffic will be to, from or within the Asia-Pacific region, compared with about one third currently.

"The Asia-Pacific region shows the most robust market gains, with China leading the way," said Tinseth. Boeing said that the Middle East - one of the fastest growing regions for air travel in recent years - represents another "very strong market."

World Cup adds 1pc to South African annual growth

The world Cup will boost the South African growth rate by one percentage point this year, the finance minister said.

"We had forecast that the 2010 FIFA World Cup would add 0.5 percentage points to annual growth this year," finance minister Pravin Gordhan told business leaders at a dinner. But, he said, when spending on stadiums and infrastructure since 2006 was taken into account that rose to a one percentage point increase.

The government spent 33 billion rands (\$4.4b) on preparation for the month-long tournament which was held on the African continent for the first time.

In February, the minister said South Africa's economy was expected to grow by 2.3 per cent this year, boosted in part by the football World Cup, after contracting by 1.8 per cent last year.

মূল্যস্ফীতি সহনীয় পর্যায়ে রাখার অঙ্গীকার

মূল্যস্ফীতির চাপ সহনীয় রাখাকে অগ্রাধিকার দিয়ে চলতি অর্থবছরের প্রথমার্ধের জন্য মুদ্রানীতি ঘোষণা করেছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। মূল্যস্ফীতির পাশাপাশি অনুৎপাদনশীল ও ফটকাবাজারি খাতে ঋণের লাগাম টেনে ধরার কথা বলা হয়েছে এতে। অধিকসংখ্যক মানুষের অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত করে প্রবৃদ্ধি দ্রুততর করা এবং দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনে সরকারের নানামুখী উদ্যোগে আর্থিক সমর্থন জোগানোর বিষয়গুলো গুরুত্ব পেয়েছে নতুন মুদ্রানীতিতে। সম্প্রতি বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের সম্মেলন কক্ষে গভর্নর ড. আতিউর রহমান নতুন মুদ্রানীতি ঘোষণা করেন।

ঘোষিত মুদ্রানীতিতে অভ্যন্তরীণ ঋণ প্রবাহের লাগাম টেনে ধরার কথা বলা হয়েছে। বাজারে অর্থ সরবরাহ স্বাভাবিক রেখে মূল্যস্ফীতির চাপকে সহনীয় রাখতে এই নীতি অনুসরণ করা হয়েছে। এ লক্ষ্যে ঋণের প্রবাহের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে ১৬ শতাংশ। গত মুদ্রানীতিতে এ হার লক্ষ্যমাত্রার চেয়ে অনেক বেশি ছিল। এক্ষেত্রে গত বছরের তুলনায় এবার ৫ শতাংশ ঋণ প্রবাহ কমার লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করেছে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক। নতুন মুদ্রানীতিতে 'ব্যাপক মুদ্রা' বা ব্রডমানির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে ১৫ দশমিক ২ শতাংশ এবং রিজার্ভ মুদ্রার লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে ১৩ শতাংশ। আগের মেয়াদের মুদ্রানীতিতে এ দুটি লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছাড়িয়ে গেছে।

মুদ্রানীতি ঘোষণা করে গভর্নর বলেন, নতুন মুদ্রানীতিতে বরাবরের মতো মূল্য পরিস্থিতি স্থিতিশীল রাখার বিষয়টিই বেশি গুরুত্ব পেয়েছে। অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক প্রবৃদ্ধির ধারা বজায় রাখতে চলতি অর্থবছরেও প্রবৃদ্ধি সহায়ক মুদ্রানীতি বজায় থাকবে। তবে মূল্যস্ফীতির চাপ সর্বক্ষণ পর্যবেক্ষণে রাখতে হবে। আর্থিক সেবায় মানুষকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের উদ্যোগে কৃষি, মাঝারি উদ্যোগ, নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি ও অন্যান্য উৎপাদনমুখী খাতকে জোরদার করা হবে। এর পাশাপাশি অপচয়ী ভোগ, অনুৎপাদনশীল ফটকাবাজারি বিনিয়োগ নিরুৎসাহিত করতে বর্তমান ধারাকে গতিশীল করা হবে। তিনি বলেন, গত বছর কৃষি প্রবৃদ্ধি জোরালো ছিল। এর পেছনে সামগ্রিকভাবে অনুকূল আবহাওয়া, উপকরণ সরবরাহে সরকারের সময়োচিত সমর্থন, কৃষিক্ষেত্রের পর্যাপ্ত ও সময়োচিত জোগানে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের সক্রিয়তা বড় ধরনের অবদান রেখেছে।

শিল্প খাতে প্রবৃদ্ধি সামান্য কম হলেও বিদ্যমান গ্যাস ও বিদ্যুৎ সমস্যার কারণে উৎপাদন বিঘ্ন হওয়া এবং বিশ্বমন্দার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে প্রত্যাশার চেয়ে রফতানি কিছুটা কম হলেও তা সন্তোষজনক ছিল। কাল্পনিক লক্ষ্যমাত্রায় প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করতে হলে কৃষির জন্য অনুকূল আবহাওয়া, পর্যাপ্ত ঋণের প্রবাহসহ উপকরণ সরবরাহ, উদীয়মান অর্থনীতির দেশসহ নতুন বাজারে রফতানি বাড়ানোর মাধ্যমে সামগ্রিক রফতানি বাড়ানো এবং বিদ্যুৎ ও গ্যাসের জোগানে জরুরি ভিত্তিতে উৎপাদন বাড়ানোসহ অন্যান্য অবকাঠামো খাতের উন্নয়ন নিশ্চিত করতে হবে।

মুদ্রাবাজার স্থিতিশীল রাখতে সংকুলনমুখী পদক্ষেপের দিকে ইঙ্গিত করে গভর্নর বলেন, মুদ্রাবাজার স্থিতিশীল রাখতে এ বছরও নীতিনির্দেশক সুদের হার, সিআরআর কিংবা এসএলআরের প্রয়োজনমাত্রিক পরিবর্তনের মাধ্যমে ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থাপনায় কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক সক্রিয় থাকবে। অর্থ ও ঋণ বাজার সুশৃঙ্খল পরিচালনার স্বার্থে সর্বোচ্চ স্থিতিশীলতা বজায় রাখার জন্য প্রাসঙ্গিক সব পদক্ষেপ নিতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক পিছপা হবে না। গভর্নর বলেন, রেমিটেন্সের আন্তঃপ্রবাহ দেশে ভারতীয়স্ফীতি ঘটায় এবং টাকার ওপর অতিমূল্যায়ন চাপ সৃষ্টি করে। দেশের ভেতরে বিনিয়োগের মাত্রা বাড়িয়ে এই দুই চাপ মোকাবেলার চেষ্টা করা হবে। উৎপাদনশীল সব অর্থনৈতিক খাতের প্রসারে ঋণ প্রবাহ বাড়ানোর উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হবে। পাশাপাশি অর্থ ও ঋণ বাজারের সুশৃঙ্খল পরিচালনার জন্য স্থিতিশীল পরিবেশ বজায় রাখতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক বন্ধপরিষ্কার বলেও জানান তিনি। তিনি বলেন, আর্থিক খাতের দক্ষতা বাড়ানো ও স্থিতিশীল

রাখতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক সক্রিয় ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থাপনার পাশাপাশি আর্থিক খাতের স্থিতিশীলতা ও দক্ষতার ওপর তদারকি বজায় রেখেছে।

বেসরকারি খাতের ঋণ প্রবাহ কমানো প্রসঙ্গে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের গভর্নর বলেন, অনুৎপাদনশীল ফটকাবাজারি বিনিয়োগ প্রসারে নিরুৎসাহিত রাখার বর্তমান ধারাকে আরও বেগবান করা হবে। কর্মসংস্থান সৃষ্টিসহায়ক খাতে বিনিয়োগ বাড়াতে হবে। অনুৎপাদনশীল খাতে ব্যয়কে নিরুৎসাহিত করতেই বেসরকারি খাতের ঋণের প্রবাহ কমানো হয়েছে।

সঞ্চয়পত্রে সুদের হার কমলো

বিভিন্ন ধরনের সঞ্চয়পত্রে সুদের হার কমানো হয়েছে। গড়ে দেড় থেকে দুই শতাংশ হারে কমানো হয়েছে। তবে সদ্য চালু হওয়া পরিবার সঞ্চয়পত্রের ওপর সুদের হার অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে। সম্প্রতি অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ বিভাগ (আইআরডি) থেকে এ বিষয়ে একটি প্রজ্ঞাপন জারি করে দেশের সব সঞ্চয় ব্যুরো অফিস ও ব্যাংকগুলোতে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

উল্লেখ্য, নতুন অর্থবছরের বাজেটে পেনশনভোগী এবং সদ্য চালু হওয়া পরিবার সঞ্চয়পত্র ছাড়া বাকি সব ধরনের সঞ্চয়পত্রে মুনাফাকে কমানোর আওতায় আনা হয়েছে। এখন সুদের হারও কমানো হলো। এর ফলে ক্ষুদ্র সঞ্চয়কারীরা সবচেয়ে বেশি বিপাকে পড়বেন বলে মনে করেন সংশ্লিষ্টরা।

নতুন প্রজ্ঞাপন অনুযায়ী, পাঁচ বছর মেয়াদি বাংলাদেশ সঞ্চয়পত্রের সুদের হার ১২ শতাংশ থেকে নামিয়ে সাড়ে ১০ শতাংশ করা হয়েছে। এক্ষেত্রে বর্তমানের চেয়ে সুদের হার কমেছে দেড় শতাংশ। তিন মাস অন্তর মুনাফাভিত্তিক সঞ্চয়পত্রের সুদের হার সাড়ে ১১ শতাংশ থেকে ১০ শতাংশ করা হয়েছে। এ প্রকল্পে সুদের হার কমানো হয়েছে দেড় শতাংশ। অন্যদিকে, পেনশনভোগী সঞ্চয়পত্রের সুদের হার ১১ শতাংশ করা হয়েছে। বর্তমানে এ সঞ্চয়পত্রের সুদের হার সাড়ে ১২ শতাংশ। এছাড়া ডাকঘর সঞ্চয় প্রকল্পে সুদের হার ২ শতাংশ কমিয়ে ১০ শতাংশ করা হয়েছে। আগে ডাকঘর সঞ্চয়পত্রে সুদের হার ছিল ১২ শতাংশ। এদিকে ওয়েজ আর্নার ডেভেলপমেন্ট বন্ডেও সুদের হার কমানো হয়েছে। এখন থেকে ওয়েজ আর্নার ডেভেলপমেন্ট বন্ডে বিনিয়োগ করলে পাওয়া যাবে সাড়ে ১০ শতাংশ সুদ। আগে এ সুদের হার ছিল ১২ শতাংশ। ওয়েজ আর্নার বন্ডে সুদের হার কমল ২ শতাংশ।

এখন থেকে সব ধরনের সঞ্চয়পত্রে সর্বোচ্চ ৩০ লাখ টাকা পর্যন্ত একক নামে বিনিয়োগ করা যাবে। আর যৌথ নামে ৬০ লাখ টাকা পর্যন্ত বিনিয়োগ করা সম্ভব হবে। আগে এক কোটি টাকা পর্যন্ত সঞ্চয়পত্রে বিনিয়োগ করা যেত। সঞ্চয়পত্রে সুদের হার কমানো এবং করারোপের ফলে বিপাকে পড়বেন ক্ষুদ্র সঞ্চয়কারীরা। চলতি অর্থবছরের শুরু থেকে ব্যাংক সুদের হার কমানোর ফলে সঞ্চয়পত্রে বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে থাকে। এতে সরকারের ব্যয় বাড়ার চাপ থাকায় গত জানুয়ারি মাসে সঞ্চয়পত্রে সুদের হার পুনর্নির্ঘাসে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ডেপুটি গভর্নর জিয়াউল হাসান সিদ্দিকীকে প্রধান করে কমিটি গঠন করা হয়। সে কমিটি গত মে মাসে প্রতিবেদন জমা দেয়। কমিটির সুপারিশ অনুযায়ী গতকাল সঞ্চয়পত্রের সুদের হার কমানোর সিদ্ধান্ত কার্যকর করা হয়।

নতুন কৃষিক্ষেত্র নীতিমালা ঘোষণা

চলতি অর্থবছর ঋণ বিতরণে অতিরিক্ত কিছু ক্ষেত্র ও খাত চিহ্নিত করে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক নতুন কৃষিক্ষেত্র নীতিমালা ঘোষণা করেছে। ২০১০-১১ অর্থবছরে কৃষি খাতে ১২ হাজার ৬১৭ কোটি ৪০ লাখ টাকার কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে। দেশের ব্যাংকগুলোর কাছ থেকে হিসাব নিয়ে এই নতুন লক্ষ্যমাত্রা তৈরি করা হয়েছে। চলতি বছরের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা হচ্ছে গত বছরের তুলনায় ৯ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশ বেশি, যা জাতীয় বাজেটের প্রায় ৯ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ।

গত বছর অর্থাৎ ২০০৯-১০ বছর কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ১১ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা। সে বছর লক্ষ্যমাত্রার ৯৭ শতাংশ অর্থাৎ ১১ হাজার ১১৭ কোটি টাকার কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণ করা হয়।

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের গভর্নর ড. আতিউর রহমান সম্প্রতি এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে নতুন নীতিমালা ও লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণের ঘোষণা দেন। সংবাদ সম্মেলনের আগে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক দেশের সব তফসিলি ব্যাংকের প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তাদের নিয়ে গঠিত ব্যাংকার্স কমিটির সভায় নতুন নীতিমালা তুলে ধরে।

নীতিমালা অনুসারে কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণের নতুন ক্ষেত্র ও খাতগুলো হলো কমলা, আনার, স্ট্রবেরি, পান, মধু, চাষ ইত্যাদি। এ ছাড়া বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে টিস্যু কালচার, উচ্চমূল্যের ফসল উৎপাদনের জন্য কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণের নির্দেশনা দিয়েছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। আতিউর রহমান বলেন, বিশ্বব্যাপী অর্থনৈতিক মন্দা পরিস্থিতিতে বাংলাদেশ তেমন আক্রান্ত হয়নি। তার অন্যতম কারণ ভালো কৃষি উৎপাদন। তিনি বলেন, কৃষি খাত দুই ভাবে দেশের অর্থনীতিকে রক্ষা করে। খাদ্য সরবরাহ ঠিক রাখা এবং এর ফলে মানুষের আয় বৃদ্ধি পাওয়া।

গভর্নর বলেন, 'বিশ্বমন্দা পরিস্থিতিতে এখন বিভিন্ন দেশ অভ্যন্তরীণ চাহিদা সৃষ্টির বিষয়ে উদ্যোগী হয়েছে। আর আমরা আগেভাগেই কৃষি এবং ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প খাতকে গুরুত্ব দিয়েছি অভ্যন্তরীণ চাহিদা তৈরি করতে। এসব ক্ষেত্রে আমাদের এখন অনেকেই অনুসরণ করেছে। প্রণীত কৃষিক্ষেত্র নীতিমালায় পাট চাষের ব্যাপারে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে। গভর্নর বলেন, বাংলাদেশের বিজ্ঞানীরা সম্প্রতি পাটের জীবনরহস্য আবিষ্কার করেছে, যা পাট চাষের ক্ষেত্রে একটি যুগান্তকারী জমিকা রাখবে। পাট চাষের ক্ষেত্রে এই যে নতুন সম্ভাবনা তৈরি হয়েছে, তাতে প্রণোদনা দেওয়ার জন্য সরকারও চেষ্টা করছে।

নীতিমালায় বাণিজ্যিক ভিত্তিতে পাম চাষের ওপর গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে। বলা হয়েছে, সরকারের কৃষি সম্প্রসারণ বিভাগের মতে, ২৭টি জেলা/এলাকায় পাম চাষ করা সম্ভব। ইতিমধ্যে কোনো কোনো এলাকায় পামগাছ রোপণ করা হয়েছে। গভর্নর বলেন, 'আমি জেনেছি, পাম তেলের থেকে বায়ো-ডিজেল তৈরির উদ্যোগে নেওয়া যেতে পারে। ফলে আর্থিক সহায়তার মাধ্যমে কৃষকদের বাণিজ্যিক ভিত্তিতে পাম চাষে অগ্রসর করার জন্য নীতিমালায় এ বিষয়টি অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হয়েছে।' আতিউর রহমান জানান, তিনি কয়েক দিন আগে দেশের উপকূলীয় জেলা বরগুনার গিয়েছিলেন। সেখানে তিনি কৃষি কাজে সৌরচালিত সেচব্যবস্থা উদ্বোধন ও কয়েকটি ব্যাংকের ক্ষুদ্র কৃষিক্ষেত্র কর্মসূচিতে (এনজিওর মতো গ্রুপ গঠন করে কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণ কর্মকাণ্ড) অংশ নেন।

গভর্নর বলেন, 'বরগুনা সৌরশক্তির ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে এক ফসলি জমিকে তিন ফসলিতে পরিণত করার উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে।' গভর্নর বলেন, সৌরশক্তির মাধ্যমে সেচ প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা একদিকে জাতীয় স্তরের ওপর চাহিদা চাপ লাগবে এবং সৌরশক্তি নির্ভর সেচকাজে জু-উপরিষ্ক পানি (সারফেস ওয়াটার) ব্যবহার করা হবে, যা পরিবেশের ভারসাম্যকে বজায় রাখবে। কৃষিক্ষেত্র নীতিমালায় সৌরশক্তিচালিত সেচযন্ত্র ক্রমে ঋণ বিষয়টি অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হয়েছে। সৌরশক্তিচালিত সেচযন্ত্র প্রায় ২০ বছর ব্যবহার করা যায়। ফলে প্রাথমিক ব্যয় কিছুটা বেশি হলেও প্রকৃত অর্থে তা ব্যয় সাশ্রয়ী বলে মন্তব্য করেন গভর্নর। আতিউর রহমান বলেন, 'বিশেষ করে দক্ষিণ বাংলায় এখনো এক ফসলি জমিই বেশি। এই সেচপদ্ধতি অনেকটাই প্রাসঙ্গিক বলে আমাদের বিশ্বাস।'

কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা এবার রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানাধীন বিশেষায়িত ব্যাংক পাঁচ হাজার ৬৪০ কোটি টাকা, রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানাধীন বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক (বিআরডিবিবি কিছু অংশসহ) দুই হাজার ৫৭৫ কোটি টাকা, বেসরকারি ব্যাংক তিন হাজার ৪৮ কোটি ৬৫ লাখ টাকা, বিদেশি ব্যাংক ৫৮২ কোটি ৭৫ লাখ টাকা এবং বিআরডিবি ও বিএসবিএল মিলে ৭৭১ কোটি টাকা কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করেছে। এক প্রস্তাবের ছবাবে এস এম মনিরুজ্জামান বলেন, বিদেশি ব্যাংকগুলো নিজেরা কৃষিক্ষেত্র বিতরণ করছে না।

তার ক্ষুদ্র ঋণদান প্রতিষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে অংশীদারিত্ব ভিত্তিতে এই ঋণ কার্যক্রম চালাচ্ছে। চলতি বছর থেকে তাদের এই ঋণ তদারকি করতে বলা হয়েছে।

সিআইপি মর্যাদা পেলেন ৯১ ব্যবসায়ী শিল্পোদ্যোক্তা ও প্রবাসী

ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য ও অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ডে অবদানের স্বীকৃতি হিসেবে ২০০৯ সালের জন্য বিভিন্ন ক্যাটাগরিতে দেশের মোট ৯১ ব্যবসায়ী, শিল্পোদ্যোক্তা ও প্রবাসীকে বাণিজ্যিক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ব্যক্তি বা সিআইপি (কমার্শিয়াল ইম্পোর্টেন্ট পারসন) নির্বাচিত করেছে সরকার। মন্ত্রিপরিষদ বিভাগ থেকে সম্প্রতি তালিকাটি চূড়ান্ত করে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অনুমোদনের জন্য পাঠানো হয়েছে। নির্বাচিত সিআইপিরা পরবর্তী এক বছরের জন্য সরকারি বিভিন্ন সুযোগ-সুবিধা ভোগ করতে পারবেন। নতুন সিআইপি তালিকায় বৈধ চ্যানেলে রেমিট্যান্স পাঠানোর স্বীকৃতি হিসেবে ১০ জন প্রবাসী, বাণিজ্যিক ক্যাটাগরিতে ৩২ জন এবং রপ্তানি ক্যাটাগরিতে ৪৯ জন নির্বাচিত হয়েছেন। আমদানি ক্যাটাগরিতে শর্ত পূরণে ব্যর্থতার কারণে কাউকে নির্বাচিত করা হয়নি। সিআইপি নির্বাচন কমিটির সভাপতি মন্ত্রিপরিষদ সচিব এম আবদুল আজিজ স্বাক্ষরিত তালিকাটি একই মন্ত্রণালয়ের সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব ড. নাসিম আহমেদ সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভিন্ন দপ্তরে অবগতির জন্য পাঠিয়েছেন।

ট্রেড বা বাণিজ্য ক্যাটাগরিতে মোট ৪০ জনের নাম প্রস্তাব করেছিল বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়। কিন্তু কর, বিল ও ঋণখেলাপি হওয়ার কারণে আটজনকে বাদ দেওয়া হয়েছে। যাদের চূড়ান্তভাবে নির্বাচন করা হয়েছে তাঁরা হলেন অ্যামচেম সভাপতি আফতাব উল ইসলাম, একবিসিসিআইয়ের সাবেক সভাপতি আনিসুল হক, সহসভাপতি আবুল কাশেম আহমেদ ও আবু আলম চৌধুরী। পরিচালকদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন আমিনুল হক, হাশেম আলী, জুনজুন মাহমুদ খান, এ কে এম রফিকুল ইসলাম, রজ্জব শরীফ, বজলুর রহমান, কুহিনুর ইসলাম, শামসুল আলম, বিজয় কুমার কেজরীওয়াল, আমিনুল বারী, শামসুল হক, মাহবুব ইসলাম রুহু, ওবায়দুর রহমান, সাফকাত হায়দার, ফারুকুল ইসলাম শোভা, জালাল উদ্দিন, জসিম উদ্দিন, আনোয়ার হোসেন, কামরান তানভিরুর রহমান, এস এম শফিউজ্জামান, কাজী বেলায়েত হোসেন, এ কে এম নূরুল ফজল বুলবুল, আবদুল মাতলুব আহমদ, মীর নিজাম উদ্দিন আহমেদ ও দিলাদার আহমেদ সেলিম। এ ছাড়া রয়েছেন বিসিআই সভাপতি শাহেদুল ইসলাম, বিটিএমএ সভাপতি আবদুল হাই সরকার ও বিকেএমইএ প্রাক্তন সভাপতি ফজলুল হক।

যে ১০ জন প্রবাসীকে সিআইপি নির্বাচন করা হয়েছে তাঁরা হলেন মৌলভীবাজারের ইংল্যান্ড প্রবাসী ড. এম জি মৌলা মিয়া, ঠাকুর যুক্তরাষ্ট্র প্রবাসী নাজিম আবেদীন চৌধুরী, ঢাকার ওমান প্রবাসী গোলাম কবির জুইয়া, ঢাকার ওমান প্রবাসী হেদায়েত উল্লাহ, চট্টগ্রামের আরব আমিরাত প্রবাসী মোহাম্মদ আলী, চট্টগ্রামের আরব আমিরাত প্রবাসী মীর সেলিম উদ্দিন, ঢাকার কাতার প্রবাসী লিয়াকত আলী, ঢাকার জাপান প্রবাসী কাজী সারোয়ার হাবীব, চট্টগ্রামের আরব আমিরাত প্রবাসী এম এন আলম ও ঢাকার যুক্তরাজ্য প্রবাসী আবদুল রহিম। এসব অনাবাসী নাগরিকরা এক বছরে বৈধ চ্যানেল ন্যূনতম পাঁচ লাখ ডলার দেশে পাঠানোর স্বীকৃতি হিসেবে সিআইপি মর্যাদা পাচ্ছেন।

রপ্তানি খাতে বিশেষ অবদানের জন্য যে ৪৮ জনকে সিআইপি হিসাবে নির্বাচন করা হয়েছে তাঁরা হলেন, কাঁচা পাটে এফ আর জুটের ব্যবস্থাপক পরিচালক শরীফ ফজলুর রহমান, উত্তরা জুটের চেয়ারম্যান সজিত কুমার ভট্টাচার্য, রেজা জুটের চেয়ারম্যান সেলিম রেজা, এ কে জুটের চেয়ারম্যান অশোক কুমার দাস, ইস্টার্ন ট্রেডার্সের সনজিত কুমার দাস, জনতা জুটের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক নাজমুল হক ও আকিস জুটের চেয়ারম্যান শেখ নাসির উদ্দিন। চামড়া খাতে সিআইপি হয়েছেন এসএএফ ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজের চেয়ারম্যান শেখ মোমিন উদ্দিন। চামড়াছাত পণ্য রপ্তানিতে সিআইপি হয়েছেন পিকার্ড বাংলাদেশের সায়ফুল ইসলাম। হিমায়িত খাদ্যে যারা সিআইপি হয়েছেন তাঁরা হলেন সি মার্ক

লিমিটেডের চেয়ারম্যান ইকবাল আহমেদ, ফ্রেঞ্চ ফুডসের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক তৌহিদুর রহমান, জাহানাবাদ সি ফুডসের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক আবদুল জব্বার মোল্লা ও মীনহার সি ফুডসের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক হাবীব উল্লা খান। চা রপ্তানিতে সিআইপি হয়েছেন এইচআরসি সিডিকিটের চেয়ারম্যান সাঈদ হোসেন চৌধুরী। তৈরি পোশাক (ওভেন একক) রপ্তানিতে সিআইপি হয়েছেন সিনহা ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজের চেয়ারম্যান আনিসুর রহমান সিনহা, অনঙ্গ অ্যাপারেলসের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক শরীফ জহির, ইন্টারফ্যাশন শার্টের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক আহসান কবির খান, ম্যানতা অ্যাপারেলসের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক আবদুস সালাম মুর্শেদী ও আলিফ গার্মেন্টের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক আজিজুল ইসলাম। তৈরি পোশাক (ওভেন গ্রুপ) রপ্তানিতে অন্য যারা সিআইপি হয়েছেন তাঁরা হলেন অন্য যারা গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান সাজ্জাদুর রহমান মুখা, রাজধানী এন্টারপ্রাইজের চেয়ারম্যান গোবিন্দ চন্দ্র সাহা, মিন ট্রেডের চেয়ারম্যান শাহাব উদ্দিন ও ক্যাপিটাল এন্টারপ্রাইজের চেয়ারম্যান গকুল চন্দ্র সাহা।

এছাড়া প্রেসিং খাতে সিআইপি নির্বাচিত হলেন অ্যাগ্రిকালচারাল মার্কেটিংয়ের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক মেজর জেনারেল (অব.) আমজাদ খান চৌধুরী। ফার্মাসিউটিক্যালস খাতে সিআইপি হলেন বেঞ্জিমকো ফার্মার প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা নাজমুল হাসান, হস্তশিল্পজাত পণ্যে কনসল্টেংয়ের চেয়ারম্যান আবু আলম চৌধুরী ও সানট্রেড-এর ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক গোলাম এহসান। কম্পিউটার সফটওয়্যার রপ্তানিতে সিআইপি হলেন সার্ভিস লিমিটেডের চেয়ারম্যান এ এস এম মহিউদ্দিন মোনেম। স্পেশালাইজড টেক্সটাইলে জাবের অ্যান্ড থোবায়ের ফেব্রিকের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক নূরুল ইসলাম, এসিএস টেক্সটাইলের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক দাউদ আকবানী। নিট রপ্তানিতে (একক) কেয়া কম্পোজিটের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক আবদুল খালেক পাঠান, মেট্রো নিটিং অ্যান্ড ডাব্লিংয়ের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক অমল পোদ্দার, খালেক নিটিংয়ের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক বেগম খালেদা পারভীন, তুং হাই সোয়েটারের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক মাহবুবুর রহমান, ফোর এইচ ফ্যাশনস-এর ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক গাওয়া সিরাজ জামিল, স্টার লাইট সোয়েটারের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক সালাউদ্দিন আলমগীর, ল্যাভমার্কেট চেয়ারম্যান দীপক ভৌমিক, মাস্টিপ্যাবসের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক মহিউদ্দিন ফারুকী, ফকির নিটওয়্যারের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক ফকির আক্তারুজ্জামান ও জিএমএস কম্পোজিটের পরিচালক শামসুল আরেফিন। এ ছাড়া নিট খাতে (গ্রুপে) সিআইপি হয়েছেন মঞ্জল গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান আবদুল মজিদ মঞ্জল, কেডিএস গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান খলিলুর রহমান, কিপটন গ্রুপের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক এমডিএম জালাল উদ্দিন চৌধুরী ও জেকে গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান জাহাঙ্গীর আলম খান। সিরামিক রপ্তানিতে মুন্সিরা মিকের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক বেগম আফরোজা খান, মেলামাইন খাতে শরীফ মেলামাইনের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক রজ্জব শরীফ, প্রাস্টিক পণ্যে বেঙ্গল প্রাস্টিকের পরিচালক জসিম উদ্দিন, বিবিধ পণ্য রপ্তানিতে অন্য যারা সিআইপি হয়েছেন তাঁরা হলেন প্রাইম টেক্সটাইলের চেয়ারম্যান আবদুল আউয়াল ও জেএইচ ব্রদার্সের চেয়ারম্যান জসিম উদ্দিন। সর্ভশ্রী মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্র জানায়, নির্বাচিত সিআইপির নামের তালিকা প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অনুমোদনের পর তাঁদের আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে সম্মাননা জানাবে সরকার।

৮০০ কোটি টাকা বাড়তি রাজস্ব আদায় করেছে এনবিআর

সদ্য বিদায়ী অর্থবছরে লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছাড়িয়ে অতিরিক্ত ৭৯৮ কোটি টাকার রাজস্ব আদায় করেছে জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড (এনবিআর)। মূল্যসংযোজন কর বা ভ্যাট থেকে সবচেয়ে বেশি রাজস্ব আদায় করা হয়েছে। এর পরই রয়েছে আয়কর। এনবিআরের তৈরি রাজস্ব আদায় পরিস্থিতির ওপর তৈরি প্রতিবেদন থেকে জানা গেছে, চলতি অর্থবছরের মোট রাজস্ব আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ৬১ হাজার কোটি টাকা। আর আদায় হয়েছে ৬১ হাজার ৭৯৮ কোটি টাকা।

বিগত অর্থবছরের তুলনায় ১৮ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধিতে এ রাজস্ব আয় হয়েছে। ভ্যাট ও আয়করের প্রবৃদ্ধি ২৩ শতাংশ, আমদানি শুল্কের প্রবৃদ্ধি ৯ দশমিক ৬৭

শতাংশ। আমদানি শুল্ক রাজস্ব আদায় অপেক্ষা কম হলেও লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জিত হয়েছে। এছাড়া আমদানি শুল্কের দুর্বলতা পূরণ করে দিয়েছে ভ্যাট ও আয়কর। বিদায়ী অর্থবছরে আয়কর আদায় হয়েছে ১৭ হাজার ৮৭ কোটি টাকা। লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ১৬ হাজার ৫৬০ কোটি টাকা। বেশি আদায় হয়েছে ৫২৭ কোটি টাকা। অন্যদিকে ভ্যাট থেকে রাজস্ব আদায় লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ২০ হাজার ৭৩৫ কোটি টাকা। আদায় হয়েছে ২১ হাজার ৪৩৬ কোটি টাকা। প্রতিবছর রাজস্ব আদায়ের নির্ধারিত লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ না করতে পারার কারণে অর্থবছরের শেষের দিকে লক্ষ্যমাত্রা কমিয়ে আনা হয়। অর্থাৎ ২০০৯-১০ অর্থবছরের তা করা হয়নি। উপরোক্ত লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছাড়িয়ে গেছে রাজস্ব আয়।

সর্ভশ্রীরা জানান, ২০০৯-১০ অর্থবছরে রাজস্ব লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করার পর বাড়তি রাজস্ব আয় করা সম্ভব হলেও এর আগের অর্থবছরে রাজস্ব আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জন সম্ভব হয়নি। ওই সময় লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ছিল ৫৩ হাজার কোটি টাকা। আদায় হয়েছে ৫২ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা। চলতি অর্থবছরে রাজস্ব লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে ৭২ হাজার ৫৯০ কোটি টাকা। এ লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করতে নতুন বাজেটে পুরো রাজস্ব খাতে ব্যাপক সংস্কার নেওয়া হয়েছে। আয়কর, ভ্যাট ও শুল্ক প্রশাসনের পরিধি ও জনবল বাড়িয়ে প্রায় দ্বিগুণ করা হচ্ছে। সারা দেশে নতুন কর ও ভ্যাট অফিস খোলা হচ্ছে। কর জাল সম্প্রসারণ করে তা উপজেলা পর্যায়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে। নতুন অর্থবছরে অতিরিক্ত আরো পাঁচ লাখ নতুন করদাতা শনাক্ত করার লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে। বিদায়ী অর্থবছরে চার লাখ নতুন করদাতা শনাক্তকরণের লক্ষ্যমাত্রার প্রায় পুরোটাই অর্জিত হয়েছে। নতুন অর্থবছরে থাকবে বেসরকারি করদাতার জন্য সম্মাননা আর ফাঁকিবাঁজদের জন্য কঠোর আইনি ব্যবস্থা। রিয়েল এস্টেট খাতে ব্যাপক হারে উৎসর্ক আদায়ের উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়েছে। ব্যক্তির ট্যাক্স আইডেনটিকেশন নম্বর বা টিআইএন জালিয়াতির জন্য শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থার প্রবর্তন করা হয়েছে। সং করদাতার জন্য প্রথমবারের মতো ট্যাক্স কার্ড চালু এবং করদাতাদের কর অফিসে সম্মাননা জানানোর ব্যবস্থা ও চট্টগ্রামে বৃহৎ করদাতা ইউনিটের আরো একটি অফিস চালু করার কথা রয়েছে নতুন বাজেটে। করদাতাদের জন্য গুয়ানটপ সার্ভিস ও স্পট অ্যাসেসমেন্ট করে কর রিটার্ন পূরণ করা হবে। আয়কর আইনের ৮২ (ডি) ধারার এ স্পট অ্যাসেসমেন্ট পদ্ধতিতে করদাতা শনাক্ত করা হবে। বড় বড় করপোরেট অফিস, শপিং সেন্টার, বাণিজ্যিক কেন্দ্র যেখানেই করযোগ্য ব্যক্তির সমাবেশ পাওয়া যাবে সেখানেই কর কর্মকর্তারা তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে করদাতা চিহ্নিত করবেন। তখনই তাদের রিটার্ন পূরণ করে কর আদায় করা হবে।

রফতানি খাতে গতি সঞ্চার

মন্দা-পরবর্তী রফতানি খাত ঘুরে দাঁড়িয়েছে, পেয়েছে গতি। রফতানি আয়ের সবচেয়ে বড় খাত নিট ও ওভেন পোশাকের প্রবৃদ্ধি আগের চেয়ে বেড়েছে। এপ্রিলের পর মে মাসেও রফতানি আয়ে প্রবৃদ্ধি ইতিবাচক হয়েছে। বিশ্ববাজারে দেশীয় পণ্যের চাহিদা বৃদ্ধি ও অনুকূল পরিবেশের কারণে রফতানিতে প্রবৃদ্ধি ইতিবাচক হয়েছে বলে সর্ভশ্রীরা মনে করেন। ২০০৯-১০ অর্থবছরের ১১ মাসের রফতানি চিত্র থেকে এ তথ্য পাওয়া গেছে। ইপিবি'র হিসাব অনুযায়ী, ২০০৯-১০ অর্থবছরের জুলাই থেকে মে পর্যন্ত রফতানি আয় হয়েছে ১ হাজার ৪৪৯ কোটি ১১ লাখ ৪০ হাজার ডলার। এর আগের বছরের একই সময়ে রফতানি আয় ছিল ১ হাজার ৪১৪ কোটি ৩ লাখ ডলার। অর্থাৎ গত বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় রফতানি রেড়েছে ২ দশমিক ৪৮ শতাংশ।

উল্লেখ্য, ২০০৯-১০ অর্থবছরে মোট রফতানি আয়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ১ হাজার ৭৬০ কোটি ডলার। ইপিবি'র পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী, শীর্ষ রফতানি খাত বলে পরিচিত নিট ও ওভেন পোশাকসহ টেক্সটাইল পণ্যের রফতানিও আগের চেয়ে বেড়েছে। সর্ভশ্রীরা বলছেন, মন্দায় সাময়িক বিপর্যস্ত রফতানি আয় নতুন করে গতি ফিরে পেয়েছে। ফলে রফতানি আয়ে ইতিবাচক প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে।

তৈরি পোশাক মালিকদের সংগঠন বিজিএমইএর সভাপতি আবদুল সালাম মুর্শেদী বলেছেন, মন্দা-পরবর্তী সময়ে রফতানি আয় ও রফতানির সম্ভাবনা অনেক বেড়েছে। পোশাক খাতে নেতিবাচক প্রবৃদ্ধি আগের তুলনায় কমেছে। বিভিন্ন দেশ থেকে প্রচুর অর্ডার আসছে। তবে গ্যাস, বিদ্যুৎ ও পণ্য পরিবহনে সমস্যার কারণে পোশাক মালিকরা রফতানির আদেশ সামলাতে হিমশিম খাচ্ছেন। জানা গেছে, ২০০৯-১০ অর্ধবছরের শুরুর্তে রফতানি আয়ে প্রবৃদ্ধি নেতিবাচক ছিল। মাঝখানে কয়েক মাস ইতিবাচক অবস্থানে থাকার পর নভেম্বর থেকে মার্চ পর্যন্ত নেতিবাচক প্রবৃদ্ধির ধারা পরিলক্ষিত হয়। এরপর আবার রফতানি খাত ঘুরে দাঁড়ায়। এপ্রিল এবং মে মাসে প্রবৃদ্ধি ইতিবাচক হয়েছে।

গত ২০০৮-০৯ অর্ধবছরের মে মাসের তুলনায় ২০০৯-১০ অর্ধবছরের মে মাসে রফতানি বেড়েছে ১৭ শতাংশ। ২০০৮-০৯ মে মাসে রফতানি হয়েছিল ১৩২ কোটি ২৮ লাখ ৩০ হাজার ডলার। অন্যদিকে ২০০৯-১০ অর্ধবছরের মে মাসে রফতানি হয়েছে ১৫৪ কোটি ৩৮ লাখ ৩০ হাজার ডলার।

জানা গেছে, ২০০৯-১০ অর্ধবছরের শুরুর্তে রফতানি আয়ে প্রবৃদ্ধি নেতিবাচক ছিল। মাঝখানে কয়েক মাস ইতিবাচক অবস্থানে থাকার পর নভেম্বর থেকে মার্চ পর্যন্ত নেতিবাচক প্রবৃদ্ধির ধারা পরিলক্ষিত হয়। এরপর আবার রফতানি খাত ঘুরে দাঁড়ায়। এপ্রিল এবং মে মাসে প্রবৃদ্ধি ইতিবাচক হয়েছে।

নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহারের পরও চিফিডি রফতানি বাড়েনি

নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহারের পরও চিফিডি রফতানি বাড়েনি। ৮ মাস বন্ধ থাকার পর গত ১০ জানুয়ারি থেকে ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের দেশগুলোতে বাংলাদেশ থেকে গলদা চিফিডি রফতানি শুরু হলেও এখনও রফতানির প্রবৃদ্ধি নেতিবাচক বলে জানিয়েছেন চিফিডি রফতানিকারকরা।

রফতানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো (ইপিবি) সূত্রে জানা গেছে, ২০০৯-১০ অর্ধবছরের ১০ মাসে বাংলাদেশ থেকে ৩৩ কোটি ২৬ লাখ ৬০ হাজার ডলারের হিমায়িত খাদ্য রফতানি হয়েছে। যা আগের অর্ধবছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় প্রায় ১২ শতাংশ কম। ২০০৮-০৯ অর্ধবছরের ১০ মাসে রফতানি হয়েছিল ৩৮ কোটি ৫৩ লাখ ডলার। রফতানিকারকরা জানিয়েছেন, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নে গলদা চিফিডি রফতানি বন্ধ থাকায় একদিকে চাষিরা ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছেন, পাশাপাশি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছেন রফতানিকারকরাও। আইলার আঘাতে দেশের দক্ষিণ-পূর্বাঞ্চলের কয়েকটি জেলায় চিফিডি চাষ মারাত্মকভাবে ব্যাহত হওয়ায় রফতানি আয়ে নেতিবাচক প্রভাব পড়েছে। উল্লেখ্য, হিমায়িত মৎস্য রফতানি আয়ের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম খাত।

এ বিষয়ে সম্প্রতি বাংলাদেশ ফ্রোজেন ফুডস এক্সপোর্টার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশন এর (বিএফএফইএ) সাবেক সভাপতি কাজী শাহনেওয়াজ বলেন, নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহারের পরও ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের বাজারে চিফিডি রফতানি বাড়েনি। তিনি জানান, গত বছর বাংলাদেশ থেকে চার হাজার কোটি টাকার চিফিডি রফতানি হয়েছিল। এ বছর সাড়ে তিন হাজার কোটি টাকার চিফিডি রফতানি করা সম্ভব হবে না। তাঁর মতে, আইলার আঘাতে বিভিন্ন স্থানে উপকূলীয় বাঁধ ভেঙে গেছে। এসব বাঁধ সময়মতো নির্মাণ না হওয়ায় চিফিডি চাষ করা সম্ভব হয়নি। সময়মতো চিফিডি চাষ না হওয়ায় এখনও চিফিডি অনেক ছোট রয়েছে। ছোট চিফিডি রফতানি না হওয়ার কারণে গত বছরের তুলনায় তা অনেক কমে যাবে।

রফতানিকারকরা ব্যাংক থেকে ঋণ নিয়ে চাষিদের পাওনা মিটিয়েছেন; কিন্তু চিফিডি রফতানি বন্ধ থাকার হিমায়িতগুলোতে বিপুল পরিমাণ গলদা চিফিডি দীর্ঘদিন আটকে আছে। রফতানি করতে না পারায় অনেক রফতানিকারক ব্যাংকের কিস্তির টাকা পরিশোধ করতে পারেনি। খেলাপির খাতায় অনেকের নাম উঠেছে। তা ছাড়া প্রতিযোগিতায় টিকতে না পারায় বাংলাদেশ এখন ক্রেতা হারাতে বসেছে। এসব কারণে হিমায়িত মৎস্য খাত এখন দুর্দিনে

আছে। মৎস্য অধিদপ্তর সূত্রে জানা গেছে, দেশে উৎপাদিত গলদা চিফিডিতে মাত্রাতিরিক্ত ক্ষতিকারক নাইট্রোফুরান পাওয়ার পর চিফিডি রফতানি সাময়িক বন্ধ ছিল। এরপর ব্যবস্থা নিয়ে চিফিডিতে রাসায়নিক শ্রেয়োগ বন্ধ করা হয়। বাংলাদেশের গলদা চিফিডিতে নাইট্রোফুরান না থাকার বিষয়টি ইউইউ দেশের কর্তৃপক্ষকে নিশ্চিত করার পরই আবার রফতানি শুরু হয়।

রেমিটেল প্রবাহে রেকর্ড

গত অর্ধবছরে (২০০৯-১০) দেশে প্রবাসী আয় (রেমিটেল) অতীতের সব রেকর্ড ছাড়িয়ে অর্ধবছরে দেশে রেমিটেল এসেছে প্রায় ১ হাজার ১০০ কোটি ডলার। দেশীয় মুদ্রায় যার পরিমাণ প্রায় ৭৫ হাজার কোটি টাকা। প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে ১৩ দশমিক ২৫ শতাংশ। এর আগের বছর রেমিটেলের পরিমাণ ছিল ৯৬৯ কোটি ডলার। রেমিটেল প্রবাহ বাড়ার অব্যাহত রাখতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক নানামুখী উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করার এ সফলতা এসেছে বলে দাবি করছেন কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক কর্মকর্তারা।

এদিকে আগামী পাঁচ বছরে রেমিটেল আয় ৩ হাজার ১৪০ কোটি ডলারে উন্নীত করার লক্ষ্যমাত্রা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে। এ লক্ষ্য অর্জনে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক নানা ধরনের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করেছে। রেমিটেল জাতীয় অর্থনীতিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখছে। দুই দশক আগে অর্থাৎ ১৯৯০-৯১ অর্ধবছরে দেশে রেমিটেলের পরিমাণ ছিল মাত্র ৭৩ কোটি ৪০ লাখ ডলার। বর্তমানে তা বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ১ হাজার ১০০ কোটি ডলার।

বেড়েছে ১৫ গুণ। পাঁচ বছর আগে মোট দেশজ উৎপাদন বা (জিডিপিতে) রেমিটেলের অবদান ছিল মাত্র পাঁচ থেকে ৬ শতাংশ। এখন তা বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে প্রায় ১০ শতাংশ। বর্তমানে ৬৩ লাখ শ্রমিক বিদেশে কর্মরত। এর বেশির ভাগই মধ্যপ্রাচ্যে। এর মধ্যে সৌদি আরবে সবচেয়ে বেশি। তাই মোট রেমিটেল প্রবাহের ৬৩ ভাগই আসে মধ্যপ্রাচ্য থেকে। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের তথ্য অনুযায়ী, ২০০৫-০৬ অর্ধবছরে রেমিটেল এসেছে ৪৮০ কোটি ডলার, ২০০৬-০৭ অর্ধবছরে ৬০০ কোটি, ২০০৭-০৮ অর্ধবছরে ৭৯১ কোটি, ২০০৮-০৯ অর্ধবছরে ৯৬৯ কোটি, ও ২০০৯-১০ অর্ধবছরে প্রায় ১ হাজার ১০০ কোটি ডলার।

ব্যাহকিং চ্যানেলে রেমিটেল আসা বাড়লেও এখনও হস্তির মাধ্যমে প্রচুর অর্থ আসছে। তাই হস্তি নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে পারলে রেমিটেল প্রবাহ আরও বাড়বে বলে সংশ্লিষ্টরা মনে করেন। গত অর্ধবছরে রেমিটেল এসেছে ১ হাজার ৯৭ কোটি ৩২ লাখ মার্কিন ডলার। এর মধ্যে শেষ মাস জুনে এসেছে ৮৭ কোটি ৭৯ লাখ, মে মাসে রেমিটেল আসে ৯০ কোটি ৩০ লাখ, এপ্রিলে ৯২ কোটি ১২ লাখ, মার্চে ৯৫ কোটি ৬৫ লাখ, ফেব্রুয়ারিতে ৮২ কোটি ৮০ লাখ, জানুয়ারিতে আসে ৯৫ কোটি ৯ লাখ ১৮ হাজার, গত ডিসেম্বরে ৮৭ কোটি ৩৮ লাখ, নভেম্বরে রেকর্ড ১০৫ কোটি, অক্টোবরে ৯০ কোটি, সেপ্টেম্বরে ৮৮ কোটি ৭৫ লাখ, আগস্টে আসে ৯৩ কোটি ৫১ লাখ এবং অর্ধবছরের প্রথম মাস জুলাইয়ে ৮৮ কোটি ৫৩ লাখ মার্কিন ডলার। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভাগের কর্মকর্তারা জানান, রেমিটেল পাঠানো ঝুঁকিমুক্ত করতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের নানামুখী পদক্ষেপের কারণে প্রবাসীরা এখন ব্যাহকিং চ্যানেলের মাধ্যমে রেমিটেল পাঠাতে অস্বী হচ্ছেন। একইসঙ্গে রেমিটেল ব্যবসা অনেকটা লাভজনক হওয়ায় বেসরকারি বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংকগুলো রেমিটেল প্রবাহের ওপর গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে বেশি। বিদেশে এক্সচেঞ্জ হাউস প্রতিষ্ঠার মাধ্যমে রেমিটেল আহরণ জোরদার করছে ব্যাংকগুলো। হস্তি প্রতিরোধে সরকারের কার্যক্রম জোরদার হওয়ার ফলে প্রবাসীরা ঝুঁকিমুক্তভাবে ব্যাহকিং চ্যানেলের মাধ্যমে রেমিটেল পাঠাচ্ছেন। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, বিশ্ব ব্যাংক ও ইন্টান্যাশনাল অর্গানাইজেশন ফর মাইক্রোফিন্যান্সের সাম্প্রতিক এক সমীক্ষায় বলা হয়েছে, প্রবাসী বাংলাদেশিরা দেশে যে পরিমাণ অর্থ পাঠায় তার একটি বিরাট অংশ অর্থাৎ প্রায় ২৫ শতাংশ হস্তি মাধ্যমে আসে। রেমিটেল প্রেরণের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যয় কমে এলে বৈধ চ্যানেলের মাধ্যমে রেমিটেল প্রবাহ আরও বাড়বে বলে আশা করছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

কয়লা আমদানির নিষেধাজ্ঞা এক বছর স্থগিত

কয়লা আমদানির ওপর আরোপিত নিষেধাজ্ঞা আরও এক বছরের জন্য স্থগিত করেছে সরকার। দেশের সার্বিক অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নের স্বার্থে এবং কয়লার চাহিদা বিবেচনায় রেখে এ সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে। সালফারযুক্ত কয়লা ২০১১ সালের ৩০ জুন পর্যন্ত আমদানি করা যাবে বলে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্রে জানা গেছে।

কয়লা আমদানির ওপর নিষেধাজ্ঞা স্থগিতের সরকারি প্রজ্ঞাপন সংশ্লিষ্ট অফিসে পৌঁছার পর দু'একদিনের মধ্যে সিলেটের বিভিন্ন স্থলবন্দর দিয়ে ভারত থেকে কয়লা আমদানি শুরু হবে। সালফার সংক্রান্ত জটিলতার কারণে ছয় দিন ধরে সিলেটের বিভিন্ন বন্দর দিয়ে কয়লা আমদানি বন্ধ রয়েছে।

বাণিজ্য সচিব মোহাম্মদ গোলাম হোসেনের সভাপতিত্বে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ে গত সোমবার বিকেলে আন্তঃমন্ত্রণালয় এক বৈঠক অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। এতে সিলেটের কয়লা আমদানিকারকরা শতকরা এক ভাগের নিচে সালফারযুক্ত কয়লা আমদানি নিয়ে বেশ কিছু প্রতিবন্ধকতা তুলে ধরেন। এরপর কয়লা আমদানির ওপর আরোপিত নিষেধাজ্ঞা এক বছরের জন্য স্থগিত রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। এ বিষয়ে আমদানি নীতি আদেশ, ২০০৯-১২-এর অনূচ্ছেদ ২৫-এর উপ-অনূচ্ছেদ (৩৩) এর বিধানটি গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি জারির মাধ্যমে স্থগিত রাখারও সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে।

সভায় প্রধান আমদানি-রফতানি নিয়ন্ত্রক এমএ সবুর, জ্বালানি ও খনিজসম্পদ বিভাগের যুগ্ম সচিব আহমেদ উল্লাহ, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তরের অতিরিক্ত মহাপরিচালক মোঃ আবদুস সোবাহান, এফবিসিসিআইর উপদেষ্টা মনজুর আহমেদ, সিলেট কয়লা আমদানিকারক গ্রুপের সভাপতি এমদাদ হোসেন, পরিবেশ ও বন মন্ত্রণালয়, আইন, বিচার ও সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয় এবং এনবিআরের প্রতিনিধিরা উপস্থিত ছিলেন। বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় সূত্রে জানা গেছে, জ্বালানি সংকটের কারণে সিলেটের চা বাগান, দেশের বিভিন্ন স্থানে স্টিল মিল, ইটভাটাসহ বিভিন্ন শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠানে উৎপাদন ব্যাহত হচ্ছিল। এ অবস্থায় শিল্প মালিকদের পক্ষ থেকে অর্থমন্ত্রী আবুল মাল আবদুল মুহিতসহ সরকারের উচ্চ পর্যায়ে যোগাযোগ করে কয়লা আমদানির ওপর থেকে নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহারের অনুরোধ জানান।

সম্প্রতি অর্থমন্ত্রী জরুরি প্রয়োজনে এবং বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবহারের ওপর চাপ কমাতে কয়লা আমদানির ওপর থেকে নিষেধাজ্ঞা সাময়িকভাবে তুলে নিতে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ে এক চিঠি দেন। এরই পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে আন্তঃমন্ত্রণালয় বৈঠকে এক বছরের জন্য কয়লা আমদানির ওপর আরোপিত নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহারের সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। সিলেট কয়লা আমদানিকারক গ্রুপের সাবেক সভাপতি কলন্দর আলী ও সাধারণ সম্পাদক দেলোয়ার হোসেন বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের যুগ্ম সচিব (আমদানি) শওকত আলী ওয়ারেসীর সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেন। বৈঠকে পূর্ববর্তী বৈঠকের সিদ্ধান্ত কয়লা আমদানিকারকদের জানানো হয়।

সিলেট কয়লা আমদানিকারক গ্রুপের সাবেক সভাপতি কলন্দর আলী জানান, আরও এক বছরের জন্য ভারত থেকে কয়লা আমদানি শুরু হচ্ছে শিগগিরই। তিনি জানান, সরকারি প্রজ্ঞাপন সংশ্লিষ্ট অফিসে পৌঁছার পর থেকে আমদানি পুরোপুরি শুরু হবে।

বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের আমদানি নীতি আদেশ অনুযায়ী শতকরা এক ভাগ সালফারের অধিক কয়লা আমদানির ওপর নিষেধাজ্ঞার স্থগিতদেশের সময়সীমা শেষ হওয়ার পর ১ জুলাই থেকে কয়লা আমদানি বন্ধ রয়েছে। বেকার হয়ে পড়েছে প্রায় ৪০ হাজার শ্রমিক-কর্মচারী।

বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ অনেক উদার

বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশের পরিবেশ অনেক উদার। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার অন্য দেশের তুলনায় বিনিয়োগ পরিবেশ বাংলাদেশে এগিয়ে। ইনভেস্টিং এক্সেস বর্ডার ২০১০ দীর্ঘকাল রিপোর্টে এ তথ্য প্রকাশ করেছে বিশ্বব্যাংক। রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, কঠোর নিয়ন্ত্রণমূলক এবং অদৃশ্য আইন সরাসরি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধির বড় বাধা এবং এসব দুর্বলতার কারণে বিনিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে অতিরিক্ত ব্যয় যোগ হচ্ছে। বিশ্বের ৮৭টি দেশের সরাসরি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ পরিস্থিতি ও আইনের কারণে সমস্যা বিশ্লেষণ করে রিপোর্টটি প্রস্তুত করা হয়েছে।

অ্যালাশা ও হাইতিতে লাল ফিতার দৌরায়ে কোনো বিদেশি কোম্পানি প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে কমপক্ষে বছরের অর্ধেক সময় পার করতে হয়। অন্যদিকে কানাডা, জর্জিয়া ও বুয়াডায় ও ধরনের কাজের জন্য সময় লাগে এক সপ্তাহেরও কম। নিকারাগুয়া ও সিয়েরা লিওনে শিল্পের জমি লিজ নেওয়ার জন্য সময় লাগে ৬ মাসের বেশি আর দক্ষিণ কোরিয়া, সুদান ও আর্মেনিয়ায় লাগে মাত্র দুই সপ্তাহ।

রিপোর্টে বেশি ক্ষোত্রপ্রাপ্ত দেশগুলো বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমে উন্নয়নে এগিয়ে যাচ্ছে। অন্যদিকে তালিকার নিচের দেশগুলোতে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ দুর্নীতি, রাজনৈতিক অনিশ্চয়তা ও সুশাসনের অভাবে বাধাগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে। রিপোর্টে বিদেশি কোম্পানির ব্যবসা শুরু, জমি লিজ নেওয়া এবং বাণিজ্যিক বিরোধ নিষ্পত্তি- এই ৩টি বিষয়ের সম্পর্কে বিস্তারিত অনুসন্ধান করা হয়েছে। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার মধ্যে আফগানিস্তানে নতুন ব্যবসা শুরু করতে বিদেশি কোম্পানিকে সবচেয়ে কম আনুষ্ঠানিককতা সম্পন্ন করতে হয়। অন্যদিকে নতুন ব্যবসা শুরু করতে বাংলাদেশ, ভারত ও শ্রীলংকায় লাগে প্রায় এক মাস। শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য জমি লিজ নেওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ সবচেয়ে উদার। ৮৭টি দেশের মধ্যে নতুন ব্যবসা শুরু করতে সময় লাগে ৫৫ দিন, ৯টি প্রক্রিয়া সম্পন্ন করতে হয়। বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকারীকে জমি লিজ সময় লাগে কমপক্ষে ৫৮ দিন। জমি লিজ প্রক্রিয়ার জন্য শ্রীলংকায় ২ মাস, আফগানিস্তানে ৬ এবং ভারতে ১০ মাস সময় লাগে। বাণিজ্যিক বিরোধ নিষ্পত্তির জন্য বাংলাদেশসহ দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় দেশগুলোতে যথেষ্ট নিয়ম মেনে চলা হয়।

এ বিষয়ে বিশ্বব্যাংকের ফিন্যান্সিয়াল অ্যান্ড প্রাইভেট সেক্টর ডেভেলপমেন্ট বিভাগের সহ-সভাপতি জনমিত্র দেভান বলেন, অর্থনৈতিক মন্দার সময় উন্নয়নের ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। এর ফলে নতুন পুঁজি, প্রযুক্তি এবং ব্যবস্থাপনা দক্ষতা আসে। কর্মসংস্থান এবং পণ্যের মান উন্নত করে প্রতিযোগিতায় এগিয়ে যাওয়ার ক্ষেত্র তৈরি হয়।

ট্যারিফ কমিশনের নাম হচ্ছে ট্রেড কমিশন

বাংলাদেশ ট্যারিফ কমিশনের নাম ট্রেড কমিশন হচ্ছে। বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী মুহাম্মদ ফায়ুজ খান জানান, এর মাধ্যমে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক কর্মক্ষমতা ও কর্মোদ্যোগ বৃদ্ধি পাবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে, যা বর্তমানে সরকারের সক্রিয় বিবেচনায় রয়েছে। এ প্রতিষ্ঠানে গবেষণামূলক কাজ করে সুষ্ঠু প্রতিভা বিকশিত করার মাধ্যমে দেশকে কিছু দেওয়ার সুযোগ কাজে লাগাতে নবীন কর্মকর্তাদের প্রতি আহ্বান জানিয়েছেন তিনি। ঢাকায় বাংলাদেশ ট্যারিফ কমিশনের সভাকক্ষে নবনিযুক্ত কর্মকর্তাদের পেশাগত প্রশিক্ষণ সমাপনী অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্য রাখেন। বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী বলেন, বর্তমানে বাংলাদেশের আমদানি ও রফতানির মধ্যে কোনো ভারসাম্য নেই। ২০০৮-০৯ অর্থবছরে এদেশের রফতানি আয় ছিল ১৫ দশমিক ৫ বিলিয়ন মার্কিন ডলার এবং আমদানি ব্যয় ছিল প্রায় ২২ বিলিয়ন মার্কিন ডলার।

এক্ষেত্রে সুস্পষ্ট ভারসাম্যহীনতা বিদ্যমান। তবে রেমিটেন্স এসেছে ১০ বিলিয়ন ডলার। তাই দেশের অভ্যন্তরীণ বাজারের প্রকৃত উৎপাদন, চাহিদা, অভ্যন্তরীণ বাজারের সমস্যা নিরূপণ এবং সমাধানের সার্জেশন বের করার ক্ষেত্রে ট্যারিফ কমিশনের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রয়েছে। একইভাবে রফতানি বাজারেরও গবেষণালব্ধ ফল জানিয়ে দেশের অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করতে হবে।

৬৬০ কোটি টাকার নতুন এসএমই তহবিল

ঢাকা ও চট্টগ্রামকে বাইরে রেখে ক্ষুদ্র এবং মাঝারি শিল্পের (এসএমই) জন্য প্রায় ৬৬০ কোটি টাকার নতুন তহবিল গঠন করতে যাচ্ছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। বাংলাদেশ সরকার ও এশীয় উন্নয়ন ব্যাংকের (এডিবি) যৌথ অর্থায়নে ওই তহবিল গঠন করা হবে। তবে তহবিলের সিংহভাগ অর্থের জোগান দেবে এডিবি। ওই অর্থ আসবে ঋণ সহায়তা হিসেবে। এডিবির ঋণ সহায়তার পরিমাণ হবে ৫২৫ কোটি টাকা। বাকি ১৩৫ কোটি টাকার জোগান দেবে সরকার। আগামী সপ্তাহে এ তহবিল চালু করবে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের এসএমই বিভাগ থেকে ওই তহবিল বিতরণের জন্য একটি নীতিমালা প্রণয়ন করা হচ্ছে। তহবিল থেকে পুনঃঅর্থায়ন নিয়ে ঢাকা ও চট্টগ্রামের মেট্রোপলিটন এলাকার বাইরে দেশের যে কোনো স্থানে প্রকল্পের জন্য ঋণ দিতে পারবে ব্যাংকগুলো। সুনির্দিষ্ট কোনো প্রকল্প ছাড়া এ তহবিল থেকে কোনো ঋণ ছাড়া করা হবে না। ঋণের মেয়াদ হবে সর্বনিম্ন ২ এবং সর্বোচ্চ ৫ বছর। একটি প্রকল্পে সর্বোচ্চ ৭০ লাখ টাকার ঋণ বিতরণ করা যাবে। প্রতিটি প্রকল্পের ক্ষেত্রে পুনঃঅর্থায়ন তহবিল থেকে ৭৫ শতাংশ অর্থের জোগান দেওয়া হবে। এছাড়া বাকি ২৫ শতাংশ অর্থের মধ্যে সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যাংক দেবে ১৫ শতাংশ এবং প্রকল্পের মালিক দেবে ১০ শতাংশ অর্থের জোগান।

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক থেকে ৫ শতাংশ সুদে পুনঃঅর্থায়ন পাবে ব্যাংকগুলো। নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের ক্ষেত্রে সর্বোচ্চ ১০ শতাংশ সুদ নেওয়া যাবে। অন্য উদ্যোক্তাদের ক্ষেত্রে সহনীয় পর্যায়ে সুদ ধার্য করার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হবে। এসএমইতে উদ্যোক্তাদের ব্যয়কিং অর্থায়নে আরও সম্পৃক্ত করার পদক্ষেপ হিসেবে নতুন ওই তহবিল গঠন করা হচ্ছে। ঢাকা ও চট্টগ্রামের বাইরে এসএমই শিল্পের প্রসার ঘটানোই হচ্ছে এ তহবিল গঠনের মূল উদ্দেশ্য। শ্রমঘন এলাকা ঝুঞ্জে বের করা ও ব্যাংকগুলোকে পিছিয়ে পড়া অঞ্চলের উদ্যোক্তাদের সহায়তা করার জন্য এ তহবিল থেকে ঋণ বিতরণ করা হবে।

কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভাগের কর্মকর্তারা জানান, এসএমই খাত জিডিপি বৃদ্ধিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখছে। এ খাতের মাধ্যমে ব্যাপক কর্মসংস্থান ও দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন করা সম্ভব হচ্ছে। প্রকৃত শিল্পঘন এলাকা চিহ্নিত করে ব্যাংক ও আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে অর্থায়ন কার্যক্রম জোরদার করতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক কাজ করে যাচ্ছে। সুত্র জানায়, এডিবি ঋণের বিষয়ে আইনগত মতামত গ্রহণ শেষ হয়েছে। অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়, আরডির সঙ্গে সরকার ৩৬ বছরের জন্য এডিবির কাছ থেকে এ ঋণ গ্রহণ করছে। প্রথম ৮ বছর ১ শতাংশ হারে ঋণের সুদ দিতে হবে। বাকি ২৮ বছর সুদ দিতে হবে দেড় শতাংশ হারে। ব্যাংক ও প্রতিষ্ঠানকে ৫ শতাংশ সুদে পুনঃঅর্থায়ন করবে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

ওয়ার্ল্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট রিপোর্ট-২০১০ প্রকাশ : বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ কমেছে ৩৬ শতাংশ

দেশে সরাসরি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই) পরিষ্কারিতির উন্নতি হয়নি। এফডিআই প্রবাহের ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ আগের বছরের তুলনায় আরও পিছিয়ে গেছে। ২০০৮-এর তুলনায় ২০০৯ সালে এফডিআই কমেছে ৩৬ শতাংশ।

জাতিসংঘের শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য উন্নয়ন সংস্থা আঙ্কটাডের 'ওয়ার্ল্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট রিপোর্ট-২০১০'-এ এই তথ্য প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে। গতকাল বিনিয়োগ বোর্ড আয়োজিত এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে রিপোর্টটি প্রকাশ করা হয়। সংবাদ সম্মেলনে রিপোর্টের বিস্তারিত তুলে ধরেন জাহাঙ্গীরনগর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অর্থনীতি বিভাগের অধ্যাপক ড. ইসমাইল হোসেন। এ সময় বিনিয়োগ বোর্ডের নির্বাহী চেয়ারম্যান ড. এসএ সামাদ উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

আঙ্কটাডের রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী, বাংলাদেশে ২০০৯ সালে এফডিআই এসেছে মাত্র ৭০ কোটি ১ লাখ ৬০ হাজার ডলার। এর আগের বছর ২০০৮ সালে এফডিআইর পরিমাণ ছিল ১০৮ কোটি ৬৩ লাখ ডলার। শতকরা হারে ৩৬ শতাংশ কম। ২০০৭ সালে প্রায় ৬৭ কোটি ডলার এফডিআই এসেছিল। জানা গেছে, ২০০৬ সালে ৭৯ কোটি ডলার এবং ২০০৫ সালে ৮৫ কোটি ডলার এফডিআই এসেছিল।

রিপোর্ট প্রকাশের পর বিনিয়োগ বোর্ডের নির্বাহী চেয়ারম্যান সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, যে কোনো দেশের তুলনায় বর্তমানে বাংলাদেশে ভালো ও উদার পরিবেশ বিরাজ করছে। এ সুযোগের ফলে আগামী দিনগুলোতে এফডিআই আরও বাড়বে বলে আশা করেন তিনি। ড. সামাদ বলেন, তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের কারণে গত দুই বছর দেশে বিনিয়োগ আসেনি। দেশে গণতান্ত্রিক পরিবেশ থাকলে অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি ও এফডিআই দুটোই বাড়বে।

বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানি সংকট এফডিআই আসার পথে বড় বাধা কি-না সাংবাদিকদের এমন প্রশ্নের জবাবে এসএ সামাদ বলেন, এ সমস্যা নিয়ে কোনো বিনিয়োগকারী তার কাছে অভিযোগ করেননি। তিনি মনে করেন, দেশের উজ্জ্বল ভাবমূর্তি, অনুকূল পরিবেশ, আইনের শাসন ও গণতান্ত্রিক পরিবেশ থাকলে গ্যাস-বিদ্যুতের অপ্রতুলতা কোনো সমস্যা নয়। তাছাড়া এফডিআইর চাহিদা থাকলেই বিনিয়োগকারী আসবে, এটা জোর দিয়ে বলা যাবে না। যে দেশে সুবিধা পাওয়া যাবে বিনিয়োগকারী সেখানে যাবে।

প্রকাশিত রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী, সারা বিশ্বেই ২০০৯ সালে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ প্রবাহ কমেছে ৪৩ শতাংশ। বাংলাদেশ ছাড়া প্রতিবেশী দেশ ভারত, পাকিস্তান ও শ্রীলংকাতেও এফডিআই কমেছে। ২০০৯ সালে সবচেয়ে বেশি এফডিআই এসেছে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে, এর পরিমাণ ১৩০ বিলিয়ন ডলার। দ্বিতীয় স্থানে চীন ৯৫ বিলিয়ন ডলার।

প্রাইভেটাইজেশন কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান ড. মির্জা আবদুল জলিল বলেন, ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যের উন্নয়ন করতে হলে দেশে গণতান্ত্রিক পরিবেশ নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। বিনিয়োগ বোর্ডের সদস্য আবু রেজা খান বলেন, বিদ্যুৎ ও গ্যাসের কারণেই বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ থমকে যাচ্ছে তা নয়। আমরা অনেক প্রস্তাব পাচ্ছি। জমি বিনিয়োগের জন্য বড় একটি ইস্যু হয়ে দাড়িয়েছে।

রিপোর্ট বলা হয়েছে, উন্নত দেশগুলো একদিকে যেমন সবচেয়ে বেশি কার্বন নিঃসরণ করছে তেমনি তারা কার্বন নিঃসরণ কমানোর জন্যও বিনিয়োগ করছে। এটা একদিকে সমস্যা অন্যদিকে সমাধানের মতো। তারা জলবায়ু পরিবর্তনের ঝুঁকি মোকাবেলায় উৎপাদন প্রক্রিয়া, সরবরাহ ও অন্যান্য সেবাকে প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে উন্নত করতে পারে। বিদ্যুৎ, শিল্প, পরিবহন, বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা, কৃষি ও বনায়নে এফডিআই আকর্ষণের মাধ্যমে স্বল্প কার্বন নিঃসরণকারী দেশগুলো এফডিআই বাড়াতে পারে।

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার, আমদানি ও রপ্তানি প্রধান নিয়ন্ত্রকের দপ্তর এর গণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০৯(২০০৯-২০১২)/ আমদানি, তারিখ : ২২ জুলাই, ২০১০ অনুসারে ঢাকা চেম্বারের সম্মানিত সদস্যদের সদয় অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে,

(ক) আগামী ১ (এক) বছরের জন্য (৩০ জুন/২০১১ পর্যন্ত) আমদানি নীতি আদেশ, ২০০৯-২০১২ এর অনুচ্ছেদ ২৫(৩৩) এ বর্ণিত ১% এর অধিক সালফারযুক্ত কয়লা আমদানি নিষেধাজ্ঞা সংক্রান্ত বিধানটি স্থগিত করা হলো,

(খ) কয়লা আমদানিকারকগণকে ভারতের মেঘালয় থেকে যথাসম্ভব যেসব কোয়ারীর কয়লাতে সালফার কম রয়েছে সেসব কোয়ারী থেকে কয়লা আমদানি করতে হবে,

(গ) পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর ইটের ভাটার জিগজ্যাগ/হাইব্রীড/হপমেন্ট পদ্ধতিসহ নতুন প্রযুক্তি প্রয়োগের বিষয়টি মনিটর করবে। নতুন সকল লাইসেন্স ওধুমাড় জিগজ্যাগ পদ্ধতির ইটভাটাকে দিতে হবে,

(ঘ) ১% এর অধিক সালফারযুক্ত কয়লা ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে পরিবেশ দূষণ যাতে না হয় কিংবা ন্যূনতম পর্যায়ে থাকে এ বিষয়ে পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য দেশে কি ধরনের প্রযুক্তি/পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার করা হয় সে বিষয়ে পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর ব্যবহারকারীদের জন্য মধ্যস্থত উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করবে, এবং

(ঙ) পুরাতন প্রযুক্তি (জিগজ্যাগ ব্যতীত) ব্যবহারকারী ইটের ভাটার উপর অধিক হারে শুক আরোপণ জন্য জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করবে।

Share Market Intelligence (as on 31 July 2010)

Top 10 Turnover Leaders

Dhaka Stock Exchange			Chittagong Stock Exchange		
Company	Volume (Shares)	Turnover ('000 Tk.)	Company	Volume (Shares)	Turnover ('000 Tk.)
Lankabangla Finance	1,475,980	688,633.23	RAK Ceramics	279,400	65,471.80
Titas Gas Trans	555,200	594,397.12	United Airways	175,650	64,976.45
People's Leasing	326,827	455,149.09	AB Bank Ltd.	31,495	39,313.32
Aftab Automobiles	1,347,702	439,189.13	BEXIMCO Ltd.	129,979	38,676.55
Summit Alliance Port	1,965,200	417,153.00	Summit Power Ltd.	275,500	38,214.61
BEXIMCO Ltd.	1,343,581	400,400.57	Titas Gas Trans.	33,100	35,497.76
AB Bank Ltd.	298,403	373,537.89	Lankabangla Finance	73,070	33,963.67
RAK Ceramics	1,533,800	380,028.87	UCBL	12,876	33,884.13
Summit Power Ltd.	2,168,940	300,680.15	Social Islami Bank	842,820	30,998.92
United Airways	793,300	293,298.88	Aftab Automobiles	93,100	30,427.87

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	338,804	14.92	Grameen Phone	338,939	15.50
ICB	103,909	4.58	ICB	98,200	4.49
Titas Gas Trans.	91,694	4.04	Titas Gas Trans.	91,851	4.20
RAK Ceramics	54,005	2.38	RAK Ceramics	53,913	2.47
BEXIMCO Ltd.	47,672	2.10	BEXIMCO Ltd.	47,600	2.18
Square Pharma	45,931	2.02	Square Pharma	45,905	2.10
Islami Bank Ltd.	42,269	1.86	Islami Bank Ltd.	42,289	1.93
AB Bank Ltd.	40,124	1.77	AB Bank Ltd.	40,010	1.83
BATBC	39,859	1.76	BATBC	39,935	1.83
Summit Power Ltd.	38,538	1.70	Summit Power Ltd.	38,560	1.76

Exchange Rates (as on 31 July 2010)

Selling BC selling	Currency	Buying TT buying
92.50	EURO	88.05
69.75	USD	68.75
110.32	GB	105.97
63.91	AUD	60.21
0.83	YEN	0.77
68.63	CAD	65.63
9.00	HK	8.83
52.39	S'PORE	50.18
18.70	S. RIYAL	18.24

TRADE INFORMATION

Prepared by DCCI Research Cell

No. 07

July – 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

NUTRICARE LIFE SCIENCES

India.

Tel: +918126243619

E-mail: amittyagi.nls@gmail.com

Attn: Mr. Amit Tyagi

Items: Animal health products, animal medicines, herbal feed supplements, herbal nutraceuticals, health products, immunity products & animal health tonic, ayurvedic veterinary products, and veterinary growth products and feed supplements.

National Trading Company

(Distributor of Goodyear Tire)

Zafariya, Flat-C3, House-5, Road-34

Gulshan-CWS(B), Dhaka-1212.

Tel: 9898009, 8837021

Attn: Business Development Manager

Website : www.goodyearbd.com

Items : Goodyear Tire.

GULZAR AHMED SHERWANI

Pakistan.

E-mail: gulzarahmedsherwani@gmail.com

allazlnt@gmail.com

Attn: Mr. Gulzar Ahmed Sherwani

Items: Pakistani Super Basmati Rice.

FRATELLI RADICE SNC

Via Sprelunga, 4

20030 Seveso - Milano, Italy.

Tel: +39 0362 546047, +39 0362 546047

Fax : +39 0362 541403

E-mail: info@fratelliradice.com

Attn: Giorgio Bertozzi, Ufficio Commerciale

Website : www.fratelliradice.com

Items: Luxury Furniture in classic styles such as Baroque, Art Deco, Louis XV.

ITALIAN GLOBAL SERVICE S.R.L.

Via Nuova, 145 – 55010 Camigliano Capannori (Lucca) Italy/

Tel: +39 0583 1900090

Fax : +39 0583 1900091

E-mail: info@lgsitaly.it

Attn: Simone Lippi, Managing Director

Items : Machinery for Footwear production, Cutting and Preparation Department, Sewing and Upper Making Department, Lasting and Finishing Department.

TIME OTC CHEM

#103, Bldg. 6, Jogani Indl. Complex

Chunabhatti, Mumbai 400 022, India.

Tel: 91-22 24057763, 24057764

Fax : 91-22 24057766, 24073438

E-mail: timeotc@vsnl.net , timeintl@vsnl.com

Website : www.timeotcchem.com

Items: Daily use Disposables (Premium Quality).

FAIRS & EXHIBITIONS

12TH INTERNATIONAL FOOTWEAR & LEATHER PRODUCTS EXHIBITION-VIETNAM

Date : 8-10 September, 2010

Venue : Saigon Exhibition & Convention Center (SECC)

799 Nguyen Van Linh Parkway

Tan Phu Ward, District 7

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Organizer :

Top Repute Co. Ltd.

Room 2403, Fu Fai Commercial Centre

27 Hillier Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong.

Tel: 852-28518803 , Fax : 852-28518637

E-mail: topreput@top-repute.com

Website :http://www.toprepute.hk

SME FAIR-2010

Date : 19-23 October, 2010

Venue : Bangabandhu International Conference Center

Sher-e-Banglanagar, Dhaka

Organizer :

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)

Federation Bhaban

60, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000.

Tel: 9560102-3, Fax : 88-02-7176030, 9560588

E-mail:fbcci@bol-online.com , Website : www.fbcci-bd.org

THE 11TH WESTERN CHINA INTERNATIONAL FAIR (WCIF)

Date : 17th -21st October, 2010

Venue : Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Organizer :

Mr. Heidi Miao

Secretariat of the organizing Committee of the WCIF

Sichuan Bureau of Exposition Affairs

Room 408, Zhonghe Bldg., No. 70 Du Yuan St.

Chengdu 810016, Sichuan Province People's Republic of China

Tel: +86-28-86605830m +86-15228826235

Fax : +86-28-86605830, E-mail: exposcwinna@163.com

Website : www.westernchinafair.org

OSEA 2010

The 18th International Oil & Gas Industry Exhibition & Conference

Date : 30 November – 3 December, 2010

Venue : Suntec Singapore

Organizer :

Singapore Exhibition Services Pte Ltd.

No. 1 Jalan Kilang Timor

#09-02 Pacific Tech Centre, Singapore 159303.

Fax: +65 6272 2689 , E-mail: amy@sesallworld.com

Website : www.osea-asia.com



DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (fourth from left) receiving bouquet from the President of Bangladesh Paduka (Shoe) Prostutkarak Samity Md. Nasir Uddin (sixth from right) at DCCI on July 12. DCCI Vice President Md. Sirajuddin Malik (third from left), Directors R I Khan, FCA (second from left) and Mahabub Anam (left) are also seen in the picture.

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (fourth from right) and Director General of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Dr. Francis Gurry (third from right) seen at the inaugural ceremony of the two-day 'Regional Forum on Intellectual Property for the Policy makers of the Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific Region' at Sonergaon Hotel, Dhaka on July 19.



DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (right) presenting gift to the Director of Taiwan Trade Center, Dhaka Woody Wang (left) at DCCI on July 18.

DCCI President Abul Kasem Khan (fourth from left) seen at a meeting with Program Manager of BICF Advisory Services in South Asia Laura Watson (second from right) at DCCI on July 26. DCCI Director T I M Nurul Kabir (third from left) and Stakeholder Engagement Analyst of BICF Advisory Services in South Asia Shihab Ansari Azhar (right) are also seen in the picture.



To facilitate implementation of Dhaka Customs House Automation Project DCCI's software service provider Datasoft Management Services signed a service agreement with Dhaka Customs Agent's Association on July 10 at NBR. DCCI Directors Rafiqul Islam Khan, FCA (second from right) and TIM Nurul Kabir (right) are seen in the picture.

DCCI Director and chief guest Mahabub Anam (centre), Executive Director, DBI Md. Hossain Ali (right) and Deputy Secretary and Course Coordinator Md. Shamsuddin Azad (left) are seen along with the participants in the certificate-giving ceremony of 'Import and Indenting Procedures' training course organized by the DCCI Business Institute (DBI) on July 14 at the Institute's premises.





DCCI BUSINESS INSTITUTE A Centre for Entrepreneurial Excellence

Training Courses / Workshops in August & September, 2010

1	Store and Inventory Management (02.00 p.m.- 05.15 p.m.) 5 half days	August 21-25 2010
2	Workshop on Managing Logistics and Supply Chain (10:00 a.m.-05:15 p.m.) day-long	August 27 2010, Friday
3	How to Operate Import and Export Business Successfully (02.00 p.m.-05.15 p.m.) 5 half days	August 28- Sept. 01 2010
4	Workshop on Income Tax Planning to Minimize Tax Burden Legally (10:00 a.m.-05:30 p.m.) day-long	September 24 2010, Friday
5	How to Prepare a Bankable Project Proposal for Getting Loan (02:30 p.m.- 06:00 p.m.), 5 half day	September 25-29 2010

Fees : For Course 1, 3 & 5 : DCCI Member Tk. 3,000/- & Non Member Tk. 3,500/-
For Course 2 & 4 : Day-long workshop : Tk. 2,000/-

Payable by Cash / Pay-order or DD in favour of "Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry"

- ▶ **Corporate Discount** : 10% for 3 or more participants from one organization for each course / workshop.
- ▶ **Special Discount** : 10% for individual Woman participant for each course / workshop.
- ▶ **Registration Dead line** : At least two-working days before the starting of each course / workshop.

Certificates are awarded under signature of President, DCCI & ED, DBI

For Registration, Please contact :

DBI, Dhaka Chamber Building (11th Floor)
65-66, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
Tel: 9552562 (Hunting) Ext: 137/147/124/123
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Website: www.dhakachamber.com/dbi



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