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Thinking Aloud

Editor's Desk

The October 2021 issue of Thinking Aloud focuses on "Emerging Trade Issues and Trade Policy Reform in Bangladesh". The first page article titled "Rethinking the Import Policy Order of Bangladesh" reiterates that the upcoming Import Policy Order (IPO) 2021-24 should focus more on the development aspects against the revenue generation motive of the past IPOs. Critically reviewing the past IPOs, the article concludes that, among other issues, policy harmony, inter-agency coordination, ease of customs procedure, capacity building, concrete mention of penalties for contravention, and ease of import-related activities for women or increasing gender sensitivity are critical issues that need careful consideration in the upcoming IPO 2021-24. The second and third pages of this issue present two more articles drawing on the export policy and LDC graduation scenario of the imminent decade in the context of Bangladesh. The article titled "The need for a dynamic export policy in Bangladesh" examines the gains from the export policies of the past and the future challenges in the present context which includes the pandemic related disruptions, LDC graduation along with the inevitable fourth Industrial Revolution. The article further suggests that the export policy should be aligned with the broader development goals of Bangladesh, laid in the Perspective Plan, and the eighth five year plan. The third article on "Navigating through the new trade regimes: Impact of the LDC graduation on Bangladesh economy" focuses particularly on the impact of the LDC graduation and fully operationalised mega trading blocs such as RCEP and CPTPP on sectoral and total exports and Bangladesh economy. The article recommends that Bangladesh should focus on increasing infrastructural and institutional capacity enhancement on trade negotiations, restructuring tariffs, redesigning customs protocols, etc., for sustainable trade growth. The fourth page draws attention to the events in September 2021.

Inside this issue

Rethinking the Import Policy Order of Bangladesh

Selim Raihan

Bangladesh pursued an import-substituting strategy of industrialisation in the 1970s. The key objectives of this strategy were to safeguard the country's infant industries, reduce the balance of payments deficit, use the scarce foreign exchanges efficiently, ward off the international capital market and exchange rate shocks, lessen fiscal imbalance, and achieve higher economic growth and self-sufficiency of the nation. However, in the face of the failure of an inward-looking strategy delivering the desire outcomes, along with rising internal and external imbalances, trade policy reforms were introduced in the early 1980s.

The Import Policy Orders (IPOs) thus gradually shifted from a protectionist nature towards a gradual liberal one. IPOs during 1972-1980 were severely restricted. Only a handful of commodities were allowed to import upon having an import license. The government tried to foster domestic industrialisation and allocate foreign currency to the priority sectors, which led to a protective Import Policy Order. However, the IPO during that period was complex and suffered from administrative problems, lack of inter-agency coordination, cumbersome foreign exchange budgeting process, and procedural delays.

Gradual liberalisation of the import policy started in the early 1980s as the licensing requirement for import was abolished, and the structure of the IPOs during that period registered significant changes. The IPOs before 1986 had a positive list, but the IPOs after 1986 contained a negative and restrictive list. The validity of the IPOs became longer since 1986, which was previously valid for a year. The negative and restrive list to import had been integrated into a single list since the 1990s. From 1980 till date, the number of restricted items in the IPOs has drastically reduced, and tariff structure has gradually liberalised.

The Ministry of Commerce (MoC) is formulating the next IPO 2021-24. Therefore, this is imperative to take lessons from the ongoing import policy order (2015-18). Critical analysis of the import policy order 2015-18 provides some crucial findings which need careful consideration in the upcoming policy order.

The import policy order 2015-18 is a legally binding document, formulated back in 2015. The policy document is very long and often hard to comprehend. The IPO 2015-18 did not contain any concrete objectives. However, without specifying any concrete objectives, the policy cannot achieve its desired goal. Also, its effective monitoring and evaluation remain ambiguous. One prime concern is that, like the past IPOs, the IPO 2015-18 also had the chief motivation to generate revenue while the development aspects of the policy remained ignored.

The IPO 2015-18, like other IPOs, protects the import substitutes by imposing high tariffs and para-tariffs. Infrastructure development surcharge and supplementary and regulatory duties are the prime forms of para tariffs. These para tariffs are imposed on imports primarily to generate revenues. These para tariffs, along with customs duties, create a protectionist import regime for the domestic industries. As the domestic protection remains much higher than the export incentives, leading to high anti-export bias, such a regime makes the domestic producers reluctant to export

The issues of non-tariff measures and barriers (NTMs/NTBs), while importing, were not taken up properly in the IPO 2015-18. An ITC study states that about 53% of the importers in Bangladesh face NTMs/NTBs while importing raw materials and consumer items into Bangladesh. Document requirements, port congestion, lack of adequate testing facilities, lack of automation in the clearance process, and delay in receiving test results are significant NTMs/NTBs while importing to Bangladesh.

Though the provisions of the IPO 2015-18 are not discriminatory, adequate priorities are not assigned to understand the gender impact of services involved in trade facilitation like customs and border management, logistic services, trade infrastructure, and transportation in Bangladesh. The practice of employing gender-differentiated filters on trade policies, port-level procedures, infrastructure planning, and the design of trade promotion programs is still far from adequate.

Since 2015, the global trade and business dynamic has shifted a lot. There is no denying that the new Import Policy Order needs to address the current and emerging issues such as post-LDC graduation, Covid recovery, 8th five-year plan, perspective plan 2021-2041, and 4th industrial revolution.

The upcoming IPO 2021-24 should contain concrete objectives and measures to achieve those objectives. These objectives should be consistent with the goals of the 8th Five-Year Plan, Perspective Plan 2041, issues of LDC graduation, and the fourth industrial revolution. As the country is graduating from the LDC status by 2026, the upcoming import policy order will be critical to prepare Bangladesh for the post-graduation period. Gradual phasing out of the para tariffs, further tariff rationalisation, and the gradual binding of import tariff rates are also critical concerns to make the future IPOs gradually consistent with the WTO rules. The IPO 2021-24 must also address the issue of the creation of FTAs and PTAs. Therefore, FTA-related tariff restructuring, preferential ROO, and recognition of the product standard agencies need to be taken up in the next IPO. Also, the issue of capacity building of relevant authorities on anti-dumping and countervailing measures should be addressed.

Despite generous tariff concession for raw material and machinery imports to target the FDI industries focusing on exports, Bangladesh is yet to attract significant FDI. Along with such tariff concessions, a coordinated approach to easing doing business is a must to attract substantial FDIs. A special focus on attracting FDIs must prevail in the upcoming IPO. For the preparation of the 4IR reduced duties on research and innovation equipment needs to be considered even more.

The upcoming IPO 2021-24 should focus more on the development aspects against the revenue generation motive of the past IPOs. Among other issues, policy harmony, inter-agency coordination, ease of customs procedure, capacity building, concrete mention of penalties for contravention, and ease of import-related activities for women are critical issues that need careful consideration in the upcoming IPO 2021-24.

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The need for a dynamic export policy in Bangladesh

Selim Raihan and Recardo Saurav Antor Halder

The recent changes in global trade dynamics and the future trade-related prospects and challenges have led us to rethink our export strategies. The current export policy of Bangladesh is the Export Policy 2018-21, formulated back in 2018. It is expected that the upcoming export policy 2021-24 will be more coherent, prudent, and will cater to the current and future daunting trade issues. It is, therefore, imperative to review the achievements and shortcomings of the export policy 2018-21. This review will eventually lead to an efficient formulation of the upcoming export policy.

The Export Policy 2018-21 comprises some objectives and measures to achieve those objectives. The document has eight annexes providing policy directives for export goals, definitions, general principles of export diversifications, export incentives, services sector, etc. The principal objectives of this policy are to formulate a liberal and timely trade regime, increasing the export earnings to US$ 60 billion by 2021, establishing labour-intensive export industries in the country, export diversification (product and market), ensuring production and export of high value-added goods, maintaining international product standards and compliance practices, mainstreaming women in production and export-related activities, and expediting and expanding export by ICT and E-governance. Despite having some implementation strategies, the desired objectives of the Export Policy 2018-21 haven't been satisfactorily achieved.

The total export from Bangladesh (goods and services) in FY2020-21 was US$ 45.4 billion. This suggests that although Bangladesh, one average, registered positive export growth over the last few years, the target to reach export earnings to US$ 60 billion by 2021, as stated in the Export Policy 2018-21, was highly ambitious and unattainable. Similarly, the performance of export diversification is not much satisfactory. Still, more than 80% of the export earnings are from the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector, and in FY2020-21, the contribution of the RMG sector to the total export earnings was 81.16%. The export market is still highly concentrated too in the EU and USA.

Lack of inter-agency coordination, legal non-bindingness of the policy, lack of digitalisation and quality trade infrastructure, anti-export bias, poor product quality, lack of adequate and quality testing facilities, failure to brand domestic goods, Non- Tariff Measures (NTMs) faced in the export destinations, global demand disruptions due to the pandemic, delay and non-functionality of the proposed economics zones, and lack of effective monitoring are some of the significant bottlenecks for the effective implementation of the Export Policy 2018-21. Therefore, a proper strategy to address and tackle these mentioned issues must be formulated and implemented in the upcoming export policy.

Inter-agency coordination is crucial for the effective implementation of any policies in Bangladesh. Many agencies, ministries, and departments, such as the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Bangladesh Bank, National Board of Revenue (NBR), Customs and port authorities, Bangladesh Export Zone Authority (BEZA), Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), commercial banks, Bangladesh Tariff and Trade Commission, Chambers and business associations, training institutes, directly and indirectly, influence the overall export performance of Bangladesh. The lack of coherent and concrete goals of each of these agencies has made the Export Policy 2018-21 challenging to implement. For instance, the focus of the NBR is to fulfil its annual revenue target, while the objective of the export policies is to provide export incentives (tax holidays, cash incentives, duty drawbacks) against almost all exports. This conflicting focus often hinders the effective implementation of the export policy. The Export Policy 2018-21 is also legally non-binding; therefore, it is often difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy by the implementing authorities. There is no legal basis to ensure the accountability of the implementing agencies and no punishment mechanism in case of any failure to comply.

Despite genuine efforts of the government to increase and diversify exports, anti-export bias due to high tariffs and para tariffs on imports makes the domestic producers reluctant to export. Soaring domestic demand, high domestic protection, lesser compliance requirement in the domestic market are some significant reasons for the lack of export diversification.

Lack of quality infrastructure and ease of doing business constitute significant bottlenecks to export facilitation. Though Bangladesh has risen by eight positions in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking in 2020 (168th in 2020, 176 in 2019), the overall business climate is still not very conducive. This has led to our failure to attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) in export-oriented sectors and the creation of backward linkages, despite generous incentive schemes announced for the export-oriented FDI industries. Banking sector irregularities, delay in implementation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), cost overrun, lack of human capital, and skilled labours, port congestions, non-functioning of Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) and Central Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs), lack of complete digitalisation, the ineffectiveness of the proposed National Single Window (NSW), are some other indirect but significant bottlenecks for the effective implementation of the Export Policy 2018-21.

The performance in product branding and value addition has not been very satisfactory either. The absence of R&D and failure of domestic institutions and foreign missions to connect foreign buyers with the domestic producers are some of the significant reasons for it. The inability to comply with many NTMs and Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), due to procedural complications and weak institutions, have also restricted achieving the desired targets. Most of the exporters from Bangladesh face troublesome standard and document requirements from the export destination which limits export. The issues of NTMs/NTBs haven't been addressed properly in the Export Policy 2018-21. Cumbersome document requirement, lack of quality testing facilities, inefficiencies of customs administration, non-cooperation of other government agencies, high cost, and delays associated with the third-party testing agencies (SGS, BV) often acts as significant NTBs and hinders trade facilitation.

The Export Policy 2018-21 had also mentioned mainstreaming women in export-related activities and providing special importance to the development of the SMEs. Bangladesh Bank has also provided concessional loans to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and women entrepreneurs, though most of which were never disbursed to the target recipients. Women entrepreneurs significantly lack knowledge related to finance and customs activities. Lack of proper documents, business training, women-friendly environments (in banks and ports) restrain women's participation in mainstream trade activities. Again, the threshold gap of micro and small enterprises with that of medium enterprises is considerably high. Therefore most of the incentives provided towards the SMEs are enjoyed by the medium enterprises. The micro, cottage, and small industries hardly get any support due to their informal nature.

Our expectations for the upcoming Export Policy 2021-24 is that it should include provisions to equip Bangladesh with concurrent and future trade issues. The policy should have coherence with the goals of the 8th five-year plan, the perspective plan 2041, LDC graduation issues, the fourth industrial revolution, and Covid recovery issues. The policy should also take lessons from the previous Export Policy 2018-21, and carefully address the bottlenecks.

As we will be graduating from the LDC category by 2026, the upcoming export policy must contain provisions to gradually phase out all forms of direct cash incentives to export. Instead, it should be transformed into WTO-consistent forms of domestic support to promote exports. As we will lose our preferential market access after graduation, the new export policy should emphasize the creation of bi-lateral and multi-lateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). Special capacity-building programs, dedicated to the FTA negotiations, should be mentioned. IP issues also need to be addressed to prepare Bangladesh for the post-graduation period production and export.

The legal bindingness of the policy is still a debate. There are mixed views about making the policy legally binding. As Bangladesh is developing at a faster pace, making the export policy legally binding might have a reverse impact. However, without the legal bindingness of the policy, it remains rather a wish list. There lies a scope to rethink the legal nature of the upcoming export policy document. Also, aiming higher is good but over-ambitious objectives are never desirable. It reduces the sincerity of the policy. The new export policy should contain an action plan matrix with specific tasks assigned to specific agencies as a separate annexe.

Performance-based export incentive mechanisms should be gradually introduced like Malaysia. The industries that will ensure Environmental, Social, and Quality (ESQ) compliance, value addition, and linkages should be rewarded with export incentives and the industries that can't, will lose enjoying those incentives. In addition to that, the new policy should have elaborate provisions on NTM issues, easing business procedures, and ensuring the proper functionality of the NSW. Provisions regarding product standards, testing facilities, and Research and Development (R&D) incentives should be addressed. Special focus is also needed to enhance service export. Along with IT and ITES, nursing, logistic and trucking, and tourism services need special attention and appropriate domestic supports.

Most importantly, inter-agency coordination must be ensured for effective implementation of the upcoming Export Policy 2021-24. Without effective inter-agency coordination, the policy document will remain as a wish list without making much impact on Bangladesh's overall export scenario.

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Navigating through the new trade regimes: Impact of the LDC graduation on Bangladesh economy

Selim Raihan, Sangeeta Khorana, Mahtab Uddin

If allowed a five-year preparatory period, Bangladesh will graduate from the LDC group by 2026. Currently, Bangladesh's major exports benefit from zero tariff preferences and flexible rules of origin (ROO) in major export destinations such as the European Union (EU), The United Kingdom (UK), Japan, amongst others. After graduation, Bangladeshi exports to the EU and other major markets will lose preferential treatment and face higher tariffs and more binding regulations, including a stringent ROO. Further, Bangladesh's exports are likely to face additional competition from mega trading blocs in the regional and international markets, such as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). These will make Bangladesh internationally less competitive.

Under such changing international trade regimes, no denying Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC group will impact export-led economic growth. The high concentration of the export basket puts Bangladesh at a higher risk of potential trade volatilities. Moreover, the emergence of mega-trading blocs heightens the country's risk of greater trade loss upon graduation. Against this backdrop, this article estimates the impact of the LDC graduation and fully operationalised mega trading blocs such as RCEP and CPTPP on sectoral and total exports and Bangladesh economy.

The study uses the Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) framework with the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) model (version 10). Five scenarios are simulated: (1) impact of LDC graduation. (2) Impact of RCEP only. (3) In the third simulation, four scenarios have been considered, such as (3) impact of CPTPP only; (3a) impact of CPTPP if the USA re-joins the bloc; (3b) impact of CPTPP if the UK joins the group; and (3c) impact if both USA and UK join it. (4) Impact of RCEP and LDC graduation. And (5) the impact of both CPTPP and LDC graduation.

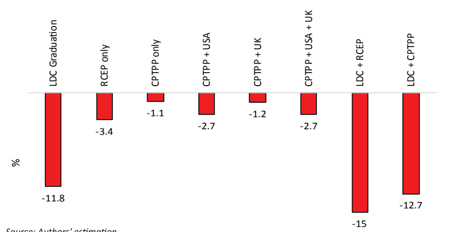
The GTAP version 10 database has 65 sectors, 121 countries, and 20 aggregate regions. For this study, appropriate country groups were generated for the simulations. Also, the sectors were aggregated into six groups, namely (i) agriculture including livestock and jute, (ii) processed food including fish, (iii) textiles and wearing apparel, (iv) leather and leather goods, (v) other industries, and (vi) other services.

Simulation results:

Sim 1: LDC graduation only scenario

In the LDC graduation only scenario, Bangladesh's total exports fall by 11.8%, equivalent to US$3.9 billion in terms of Bangladesh's export volume in 2014 – the base year for the GTAP 10 database (Fig 1).

Fig 1: Impact on exports (% change)



Source: Authors' estimation

Amongst the sectors, processed and frozen food exports would see an 11.3% decline (Table 1). Leather and leather goods exports see a fall of 3.1%. The largest fall is observed for the textiles and apparel sector (14.7%). Note that Bangladesh's jute and jute goods exports do not benefit from the EU-EBA, and the utilisation rate is only 15%. It may explain why the jute sector may remain unscathed even after the preference erosion. The same analogy is applicable for the remaining other sectors. In total, graduating from the LDC would result in a welfare loss of $2.64 billion for Bangladesh (equivalent to 1.53% of real GDP in 2014) (Fig 2).

Sim 2: RCEP only scenario

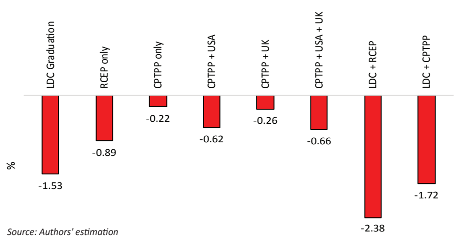
Since EU, USA, or the UK – three major markets for Bangladesh remains out of this trade block – the 'RCEP only' simulation does not portray a larger fall in overall exports. The scenario shows a 3.4% fall in overall exports with a 2% fall in food and frozen fish exports, 3.1% in RMGs, 10.4% in leather and leather goods, and 10% in other industrial exports. The export decline could be directly attributed to the increased intraregional trade among the RCEP countries and increased competitiveness from comparators such as China and Vietnam. Overall, the RCEP shows a 0.9% decline in Bangladesh's real GDP.

Sim 3: Impact of CPTPP on Bangladesh economy

In the 'CPTPP only' scenario, Bangladesh loses 1.12% of the exports, where the welfare loss is estimated at 0.22% of GDP. The results significantly change if the US or UK, or both joins the bloc. With the inclusion of the US in the bloc (Sim 3A), Bangladesh's exports fall by 2.7%, which can be attributed to significant trade diversion from Bangladesh to Vietnam and other CPTPP countries. Also, Bangladesh's real GDP sees a fall of 0.62%. With the UK joining the CPTPP (simulation 3B), Bangladesh's export sees a fall of 1.2% coupled with a fall in GDP by 0.26%. A larger fall in exports is observed when both the USA and the UK join the CPTPP (Sim 3C). Bangladesh loses as much as 2.7% of exports, where the real GDP contracts by 0.66%.

The results depict that the USA joining the trade deal would more negatively affect Bangladesh than the UK's joining it. Since Bangladesh already receives duty-free quota-free market access to the UK, UK's joining any FTA would not cause significant trade diversions from Bangladesh. However, in the USA market, Bangladesh and its major competitors face the same tariff schedules. Therefore, the USA's joining the trade bloc results in significant trade diversions from Bangladesh's to Vietnam and other CPTPP member countries.

Fig 2: Impact on GDP (% change)



Source: Authors' estimation

Sim 4: Impact of LDC graduation and RCEP on Bangladesh economy

With both RCEP and LDC graduation in place, Bangladesh's exports would fall by 15%, which is 3.2 percentage points lower than the LDC graduation only scenario (simulation 1). The change in exports for other countries is almost identical to RCEP only scenario (simulation 2). Comparing the three simulations (1, 2, and 4) reveals that around 12% fall is due to LDC graduation. The rest three percentage points fall is from the RCEP. Amongst the sectors, the processed food and frozen fish exports see a fall of -13%, RMG and leather and leather goods exports fall by 17.3% and 16.4%, respectively. The impact on the welfare loss of Bangladesh is estimated at 2.4% of GDP.

Sim 5: Impact of LDC graduation and CPTPP on Bangladesh economy

In this scenario, Bangladesh's exports drop by 12.7%, coupled with a contraction in real GDP by 1.72%. The largest fall in export is observed in the RMG (-15.7%) and leather and leather goods sectors (5%). This study does not include simulations on the impacts of LDC graduation and CPTPP where the USA, UK, or both join the CPTPP. Nonetheless, the effect under these scenarios would be significantly higher than observed in simulation 5.

The findings present several policy directives. First, as highlighted by several earlier studies, Bangladesh has no alternative but to diversify its exports basket and export markets. A diversified product basket and export destinations will reduce the magnitude of the impact and lessen external vulnerabilities. Second, Bangladesh must engage in bilateral negotiations for exploring FTAs with selected countries or even some mega trading blocs. Such negotiations take substantial time to process and implement. Therefore, an early engagement would benefit the country. Third, Bangladesh must aim to meet the EU GSP+ eligibility. It will essentially reduce the potential welfare losses and export contractions identified in this study. Thus, the government must take necessary measures, such as ratifying the ILO's convention concerning the minimum age for admission to employment. Fourthly, Bangladesh must strengthen the regional value chain in the SAARC region. After graduation, Bangladesh will not be eligible for flexible ROO in the EU, even with GSP+. However, Bangladesh can use the regional cumulation provision provided by the EU. Lastly, Bangladesh must focus on increasing infrastructural and institutional capacity enhancement on trade negotiations, restructuring tariffs, redesigning customs protocols, etc. Without improved trade logistics systems backed by a robust institutional mechanism – a sustainable enhancement in the global trade volume or moving up the global value chain would remain a far cry for Bangladesh.

Table 1: Sectoral impacts (% change from base exports)

Sector	Base exports ($ mil)	Sim 1	Sim 2	Sim 3	Sim 3A	Sim 3B	Sim 3C	Sim 4	Sim 5
Agriculture including jute	812.6	14.2	0.9	1.6	5.8	1.7	5.5	14.5	15.7
Food including fish	863.9	-11.3	-1.9	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.5	-13	-11
Textiles and Clothing	29,134.30	-14.7	-3.1	-1.3	-3.4	-1.4	-3.2	-17.3	-15.7
Leather	1,121.00	-3.1	-10.4	-1.8	-1.1	-1.9	-1.4	-16.4	-5
Other industry	893.7	37.1	-10	-0.5	2.7	-1	1.3	23.3	35.8
All services	306.8	19.4	0.1	1.1	3.8	1.5	4.1	19.7	20.6
Total	33,132.30	-11.8	-3.4	-1.1	-2.7	-1.2	-2.7	-15	-12.7

Source: Authors' estimation

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Note: This article is based on the Authors' "Navigating LDC Graduation: Modelling the Impact of RCEP and CPTPP on Bangladesh", which is currently in peer review.

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Session convened by SANEM at UNU-Wider conference

SANEM organized a session on "COVID-19 and Development- effects and new realities for the Global South", in the UNU-Wider Development Conference on 6 September 2021. The session was chaired by Dr Selim Raihan by SANEM. Among the esteemed panelists were present Dr Ganga Tilakaratna, Research Fellow and Head of Poverty and Social Welfare Policy Research, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS); Dr Puspa Sharma, Executive Director of South Asia Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE); Dr Prabir De, Professor, Research Information System for Developing Countries, New Delhi and Dr Vaqar Ahmed, former civil servant and currently Joint Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The webinar discussed the effects of the pandemic on lives and livelihoods in the South Asian region, policy responses and effectiveness of policies, and the impact of COVID-19 on the economies, states and societies in this region.

Dr Selim Raihan spoke at The World Bank webinar

The World Bank organized a webinar titled 'Driving South Asia's Growth with Services and Digital Platforms' on 9 September 2021. The webinar discussed on unlocking South Asia's potential of services-led developments through digital technology to drive sustainable growth and shared prosperity in the post-COVID world. Dr. Selim Raihan was present at the webinar as a panelist. The session was moderated by Hans Timmer, Chief Economist for the South Asian Region, The World Bank. Hartwig Schafer, Vice President for the South Asia Region, World Bank gave the opening remarks. Among the panelists were present, Fareena Mazhar, Secretary, Board of Investment (BOI) of Pakistan; Rubana Huq, Managing Director of Mohammadi Group and Ex-President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association; Rupa Chanda, Professor of Economics & Social Sciences Area, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore and Ex-RBI Chair Professor and Aaditya Mattoo, Chief Economist for the East Asia and Pacific Region, World Bank.

SANEM-AAB webinar on reflection of youths perspective in the 8FYP

SANEM in partnership with ActionAid Bangladesh arranged a dissemination event titled "Reflection of Youth's Perspective in the Eighth Five Year Plan" on 25 September 2021. Assessing the Eighth Five Year Plan from the youth's perspective is crucial when the country is going through an unprecedented crisis due to the pandemic. Moreover, the country is going to enjoy demographic dividend for the next two decades. In this regard, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) has partnered with ActionAid Bangladesh to conduct a study where one of the crucial components were assessing the youth related issues and policies on the Eighth Five Year Plan. The webinar was chaired by Dr Selim Raihan, Professor, Department of Economics and Executive Director, SANEM. Eshrat Sharmin, Senior Research Associate, SANEM delivered a presentation on the title of the webinar. The session was attended by Nasima Begum, Member (Secretary), Socio Economic Infrastructure Division and General Economic Division (In charge), Planning Commission. Among other discussants were present Nazmul Ahsan, Manager, Young People, ActionAid Bangladesh; Falguni Reza, Joint Director, Research Institute of Informatics and Development (IID); Samanjar Chowdhury, Operations Lead, BRAC Youth Platform; Esha Farooqe, Assistant Director of Operations, JAAGO Foundation and Ms Morium Nesa, Manager, Women Rights and Gender Equity, Action Aid Bangladesh. Israt Hossain, Senior Research Associate, SANEM moderated the session.

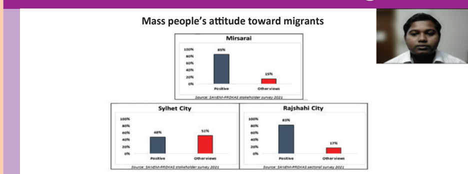
Dr Sayema H. Bidisha delivered the presentation at a2i-TBS webinar

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha delivered the key-note presentation in the webinar "Financial Inclusion of Women: The Discriminatory Socio-cultural Norms in Bangladesh" on 29 September 2021. The event was organized by a2i- Aspire to Innovate, in association with The Business Standard. The session was moderated by Tohurul Hasan, Programme Manager, a2i – Aspire to Innovate. Syed Mahbubur Rahman, Managing Director, Mutual Trust Bank Limited; Akhter Hamid, Deputy Managing Director, Bank Asia Limited; Lila Rashid, Executive Director (Retd.), Bangladesh Bank and Dr Sanzida Akhter, Associate Professor, Women and Gender Studies were present as the panelists of the event.

SANEM-Bangladesh Mahila Parishad webinar on gender sensitive budgeting

Gender sensitive budgeting can be a key tool for ensuring the equality of men and women in the society. In spite of performing well in the key socio-economic factors, Bangladesh has a long way to go in ensuring gender sensitivity in every phase of life. To discuss and analyse the gender sensitive budgeting, SANEM and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad jointly organized a webinar titled "An Analysis of Gender Sensitive Budgeting: Bangladesh Context" on 28 September 2021. The event brought together gender experts, academicians, researchers, and activists and had discussion regarding the key policies and programs for women in the national budget, analyze the gaps and expound on the idea and framework of gender-sensitive budgeting in the context of Bangladesh.

SANEM-British Council dissemination event on climate-induced migration



Under the programme titled 'Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems (PROKAS)', SANEM has conducted a survey on climate-induced migration in Sylhet, Rajshahi and Mirsharai in Bangladesh. PROKAS is a UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development (FCDO) funded programme. The study aims to identify alternative economic hubs to Dhaka where climate-displaced migrants can settle with dignity. SANEM in collaboration with British Council Bangladesh arranged three consecutive online dissemination events respectively on 19, 23 and 27 September 2021. In each of the three events, the opening remarks were delivered by Dr Selim Raihan. The survey findings of the three cities were presented by Md Tuhin Ahmed, Senior Research Associate, SANEM. The event on 27 September was attended by Mr Gerry Fox, Team Leader, PROKAS, British Council and Md Abul Bashar, Climate Induced Migration at Prokas, British Council who shared their valuable remarks.

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SANEM is a non-profit research organization registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms in Bangladesh. Launched in January 2007 in Dhaka, it is a network of economists and policy makers in South Asia with a special emphasis on economic modeling. The organization seeks to produce objective, high quality, country- and South Asian region-specific policy and thematic research. SANEM contributes in governments' policy-making by providing research supports both at individual and organizational capacities. SANEM has maintained strong research collaboration with global, regional and local think-tanks, research and development organizations, universities and individual researchers.

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