

Editor's Desk

The theme of the May 2024 issue of *Thinking Aloud* is "Contemporary Development Challenges and Opportunities in Bangladesh". The first page article, "Food insecurity: How concerned should we be?" analyses the persistent high inflationary pressures heightening concerns regarding the erosion of food security in Bangladesh. The article further examines this conundrum through discussing a recent survey conducted by SANEM. In 2018, SANEM executed a nationally representative survey covering 10,500 households across Bangladesh. During October and November 2023, SANEM, in partnership with the Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester, embarked on another round of surveys with the same sample uncovering important insights related to the food security situation in the country. Ultimately, the article concludes, a multifaceted approach that integrates economic, environmental, and social strategies will be essential for achieving long-term food security in Bangladesh, fostering a resilient society capable of withstanding future challenges. The second, third, and fourth pages of this issue present three more articles. The second article titled "Economic governance in Bangladesh" argues that implementing appropriate measures in the short to medium term is crucial for enhancing the integrity and functionality of the nation's economic governance. As Bangladesh strives to align with its long-term development goals and establish a resilient economy, it is imperative to address these issues head-on. The third article titled, "How far along has Bangladesh come in terms of digital commerce?" appraises the digital commerce landscape in Bangladesh. The article remarks that the country's digital commerce sector has been expanding steadily over the years, yet several hurdles and limitations have been observed in the sector. The fourth article titled, "Startup landscape in Bangladesh: Challenges and way forward" examines the startup sector in Bangladesh. The article contemplates that with the vision to advancing towards 'Smart Bangladesh' by embracing digital transformation and innovation, the startup scene in Bangladesh is experiencing a rise. The fourth page showcases the events of April 2024.

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Food insecurity: How concerned should we be?

Selim Raihan

The persistent high inflationary pressures in Bangladesh over the last two years have heightened concerns regarding the erosion of food security among a large section of the population of the country. Food security in Bangladesh is of paramount importance due to the country's still high number of poor and vulnerable populations coupled with high population density, vulnerability to climate change, and reliance on agriculture. As a country where a significant portion of the population is engaged in agriculture and a high concentration of urban poor and vulnerable populations who solely rely on the market to access food, the stability of the availability of food and access to food is crucial not only for ensuring human welfare and social cohesion but also for enhancing future workforce's productivity. Food security is, therefore, intertwined with economic and social stability and national security in Bangladesh.

Beyond the economic turmoil induced by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent inflationary pressures, Bangladesh contends with recurrent natural calamities, including floods and cyclones. These events pose a significant threat to the country's food security, as they have the potential to obliterate agricultural yields and disrupt food supply chains. Strengthening food security means building resilience against such events, ensuring that food distribution systems are robust and emergency food reserves are in place. It also involves investing in sustainable agricultural practices and technologies which can increase crop yields and diversify food sources.

In 2018, the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) executed a nationally representative survey covering 10,500 households across Bangladesh. During October and November 2023, SANEM, in partnership with the Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester, embarked on another round of surveys with the same sample successfully covering 9,065 households. The latest survey results provided important and alarming insights related to the food security situation in Bangladesh.

The 2023 survey included questions which helped construct a Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) following FAO's 2022 guidelines. The FIES consists of eight questions regarding people's access to adequate food. It asks, in the reference period: (1) Were you worried you would not have enough food to eat? (2) Were you unable to eat healthy and nutritious food? (3) Did you eat only a few kinds of food? (4) Did you have to skip a meal? (5) Did you eat less than you thought you should? (6) Did your household run out of food? (7) Were you hungry but did not eat? (8) Did you go without eating for a whole day?

Each question contributes to the FIES score. We conducted assessments of the FIES scores at two distinct intervals: in April 2023 and during October/November 2023. Throughout this period, escalations were observed across all eight indicators at the national level. Notably, poor households exhibited higher initial levels and surges in these indicators. For example, the percentage of poor households concerned about insufficient food availability escalated from 56% in April 2023 to 67% in October/November 2023. Similarly, the fraction of such households unable to access nutritious food rose from 69% to 75%. The diversity of their diet also diminished, with those

consuming limited varieties of food increasing from 55% to 64%. Furthermore, the incidence of meal skipping among these households grew from 14% to 19%, and 2% reported spending an entire day without food in October/November 2023.

An analogous trend emerged upon juxtaposing the conditions of poor and non-poor households within both rural and urban areas. Intriguingly, urban poor consistently experienced a more acute degree of food insecurity compared to their rural counterparts, a disparity that was extended to non-poor households as well. This suggests that urban residents, irrespective of their economic status, confront greater challenges in securing food. Contributing factors to this urban-rural divide may include the ready availability of agricultural products, prevalent homestead gardening practices, and the relatively lower cost of food in rural locales.

From April to October/November 2023, the FIES indicated a deterioration in food security for both poor and non-poor households throughout Bangladesh. The data reveals a distressing uptick in food insecurity among the poor, with moderate food insecurity climbing by five percentage points and severe food insecurity intensifying by three percentage points. Nationally, moderate food insecurity rose by three percentage points, and severe food insecurity escalated by one percentage point. By October/November 2023, the prevalence of moderate food insecurity reached 29% in rural poor households and 32% in urban poor households. Alarmingly, 7% of poor households in both rural and urban settings were grappling with severe food insecurity.

Over the last couple of years, escalating food prices, in tandem with diminishing real incomes, presented a formidable obstacle in Bangladesh for the economically disadvantaged in securing sufficient and wholesome nourishment. This predicament is particularly dire for people constrained by scant employment prospects or precarious occupations, notably within the informal sector, which lacks safeguards and employee benefits. A majority of poor people find themselves compelled to deplete their savings or incur debt to manage their daily expenditures, yet even these measures are unfeasible for many.

The aforementioned worrying picture of food insecurity in Bangladesh calls for some immediate actions to contain the inflationary pressure and undertake medium to long-term strategies. Immediate actions include ensuring a sufficient supply of food in the market through increased domestic supply and necessary imports, undertaking appropriate monetary and fiscal measures to contain inflationary pressure, addressing market distortions, and taking effective actions against anti-competitive practices in food markets. Additionally, social safety nets must be strengthened to protect the most vulnerable populations from food scarcity. The medium to long-term strategies include bolstering agricultural productivity through modernization and sustainable practices, enhancing storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses, and improving supply chain infrastructure to ensure efficient distribution of food. Ultimately, a multifaceted approach that integrates economic, environmental, and social strategies will be essential for achieving long-term food security in Bangladesh, fostering a resilient society capable of withstanding future challenges.

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Economic governance in Bangladesh

Md. Tuhin Ahmed

The term 'Economic governance' refers to the policies and regulatory structures implemented by governments to manage the economy. It covers two main aspects of public policy—the management of the overall economy, known as macroeconomic management, and the management of individual sectors or aspects of the economy, known as microeconomic management.

Economic governance is essential for Bangladesh to achieve the SDGs by 2030, transition to an upper-middle-income status by 2031, and advance to a high-income status by 2041. As Bangladesh is also expected to graduate as a developing country by 2026, it is crucial to identify the policy priorities and action plans to establish good governance and fairness in the economy. The 8th Five Year Plan, the Second Perspective Plan (2021-2041), and the Delta Plan 2100 of Bangladesh emphasize the long-run national goals which are aligned with the development targets.

During the last two fiscal years (FY2022-23 & FY2023-24), Bangladesh experienced the worst macroeconomic instability in recent years. Inflationary pressures have been particularly pronounced, with the monthly average inflation rate rising from 6.33% in July 2022 to 9.20% in July 2023 and further to 9.69% in March 2024. Similarly, the point-to-point inflation rate surged from 7.48% in July 2022 to 9.69% in July 2023 and 9.81% in March 2024. Such inflation rates not only exceed the global average but also surpass the central bank's target of 7.5% for FY2023-24. The official exchange rate witnessed a depreciation of approximately 16% between July 2022 and March 2024, while foreign exchange reserves plummeted from USD 39.6 billion to USD 25.2 billion during the same period. In response to exchange rate volatility and dwindling reserves, Bangladesh Bank implemented stringent import restrictions by tightening control over LCs, adversely affecting domestic investment. Another noteworthy aspect is the central bank's decision to fix the interest rate at 9-6% in April 2020, which persisted until mid-2023. This unconventional move rendered monetary policy instruments ineffective in curbing inflationary pressures. The escalating external debt servicing obligations also pose a growing concern for Bangladesh. According to the Economic Relations Division, external debt reached USD 100.6 billion in December 2023, with 79.2% attributed to the public sector and 20.8% to the private sector. The external debt-to-GDP ratio has been on a steady rise, increasing from 13.2% in FY2015-16 to 15.9% in June 2023.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's microeconomic management can be evaluated through various aspects, including the business environment, and banking sector performance. The country faces significant challenges in its business environment, notably high operational costs and bureaucratic complexities in obtaining business licenses. Additionally, the energy sector suffers from a lack of competition. Access to finance remains a hurdle for SMEs, while major industry sectors grapple with issues related to wages, working conditions, and worker dispute. Inadequate infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, gas, and internet connec-

tivity, also poses a major challenge. Concerning the financial sector, issues like rising NPLs, subdued private sector investment, dwindling confidence in the stock market, and fraudulent practices in the insurance market are prominent. These factors collectively impact the business climate, contributing to low FDI flows into the country.

An analysis of the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) provides insights into the state of institutions in Bangladesh. The WGI assesses governance quality across six major dimensions: control of corruption, government effectiveness, political stability and absence of violence, regulatory quality, rule of law, and voice & accountability. Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has consistently scored negatively in all these areas, indicating challenges in governance and institutional strength. Strengthening economic governance, therefore, emerges as a key avenue for improving overall governance and institutional performance in the country.

Recent irregularities in Bangladesh's economic landscape highlight the urgent need for robust governance measures. These challenges have brought to the fore the critical importance of transparency, accountability, and efficiency within the country's economic framework. As Bangladesh strives to align with its long-term development goals and establish a resilient economy, it is imperative to address these issues head-on. Implementing appropriate measures in the short to medium term is crucial for enhancing the integrity and functionality of the nation's economic governance.

To strengthen the governance of Bangladesh's macroeconomy, policymakers should prioritize fiscal discipline by implementing prudent budgetary measures. Concurrently, enhancing tax collection mechanisms is imperative to augment revenue streams, providing the government with the necessary funds for essential services and infrastructure projects. Monetary policies must be carefully crafted to curb inflation. Another pivotal aspect of macroeconomic governance entails a strategic emphasis on exchange rate management. By ensuring a stable and competitive exchange rate, policymakers can bolster international trade and attract foreign investment. Simultaneously, maintaining robust foreign exchange reserves serves as a buffer against external shocks, fortifying the country's economic resilience. Moreover, fostering diversified economic sectors is paramount for sustained stability. This involves reducing dependency on a single industry like RMG, thereby mitigating risks associated with economic volatility.

On the microeconomic front, reforms should focus on simplifying business processes, fostering competition, and supporting SMEs through improved access to finance. Labour market reforms, reforms in the financial sector, infrastructure development, and strategic investments in education, health, and social protection are essential for building a conducive business environment and fostering inclusive growth.

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How far along has Bangladesh come in terms of digital commerce?

Afia Mubashira Tiasha

Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, is now experiencing a digital revolution. The digital revolution in developing technologies is constantly transforming how people communicate, conduct business, and receive information. The economic activities that result from utilizing digital technology to connect people, companies, devices, data, and operations are referred to as the "digital economy." Web-based interactions and transactions across several industries and platforms, including big data, mobile, Internet, and information and communications technology, are all included.

To accelerate the country's economic growth, the government of Bangladesh has introduced Digital Bangladesh as its primary development goal. The government has acknowledged the ICT sector as one with enormous growth potential. Moreover, a comprehensive ICT policy and various auxiliary measures have been implemented in recognition of this fact by the government. In addition, over the years, the digital commerce sector has experienced tremendous growth. The term 'digital commerce' is related to digital payments, electronic auctions, electronic digital bureaucracy, etc. Also, it is the buying and selling of goods and services using the Internet, mobile networks, and commerce infrastructure. Without a doubt, since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in reliance on digital commerce. Due to the rapid increase in Internet subscribers, the advancement of the logistics sector, and the massive improvement in online banking and mobile financial services (MFS), the sector has flourished in recent years.

It is evident that the country's digital commerce sector has been expanding steadily over the years, yet several hurdles and limitations have been observed in the sector. Slow internet, a lack of product quality assurance, and disruptions in product and parcel delivery are some of the major constraints. The expansion of trade in the e-commerce and digital commerce sectors is impeded by inadequate supply and transportation infrastructure. Especially in the delivery of perishable goods or home-made food, if delivery is not possible on time, the main problem arises. Due to this, both the sellers and the consumers face losses. The development and alignment of logistical support with the overall situation need to be overhauled. Moreover, the transportation system also creates obstacles for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses. Fast delivery services require quality roads and highways, which should be of international standards. Moreover, traffic congestion in the city causes delays in the delivery of goods.

It's encouraging that many female entrepreneurs utilized the Facebook platform (F-Commerce) to enter the market during the COVID-19 outbreak. Nowadays, a lot of female business owners use Facebook to manage their businesses. However, cyberbullying (by both men and women) on online platforms has now become a prominent problem, which is discouraging many women entrepreneurs from running businesses. Nevertheless, it can be undoubtedly said that the development and prevalence of e-commerce and digital commerce have made women financially independent and self-reliant. They are now actively participating in

decision-making. Women are no longer dependent on their families for financial support, as in the past. However, there are bandwidth problems in rural areas, and Bangladesh's position in broadband is not very satisfactory. The absence of appropriate internet facilities makes business development through digital commerce questionable. Furthermore, despite the Consumer Rights Protection Department of Bangladesh's engagement in upholding consumer rights, fraud in the e-commerce sector and online purchasing is currently a big concern, and the protection of online consumer rights is impeded by the dearth of manpower.

The expansion of small and cottage industries appears to have enormous potential, given these businesses are connected to digital commerce. Most entrepreneurs in small and cottage industries have relatively little capital, so running a business through digital commerce is quite convenient for them.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh has adopted several policies, strategies, and action plans to support the development of the digital commerce sector. Digital Bangladesh is a major actor in the knowledge-based economy, driven by the ICT sector. Bangladesh wants to become a HIC by FY2021, with an emphasis on increasing value creation through information and ideas. With the computerization of information processing tasks and the digitization of public services, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has a firm foundation in ICT and is driving the growth of the knowledge-based economy. Several strategies and policies have been taken by the GoB to flourish this sector. To smoothen the operation of the digital commerce sector in Bangladesh, the Ministry of Commerce has issued the National Digital Commerce Policy, 2018, and the Digital Commerce Operation Guideline 2021.

The "National Digital Commerce Policy 2018" was formulated to promote, expand, and develop business through digital commerce. The main objective of this policy is to establish a digital trade system and create a local and international market using information and communication technology to transform businesses in the digitization process. The policy pledges to ensure safe digital transactions while restoring the trust of buyers and purchasers in digital commerce.

Meanwhile, the country has made significant progress in this regard. However, many challenges and obstacles are still visible. These challenges need to be overcome quickly to keep this potential sector moving. Key challenges need to be addressed to ensure skills development, ICT infrastructure and services, payment solutions, and easy access to finance. The concerned authorities of the government should strictly monitor the product delivery system and its security. Improving internet infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, can boost the digital commerce sector and engage more individuals. Also, awareness about using the digital platform should be increased. Developing digital literacy through training and capacity-building programs to ensure digital security and increasing human resources in the IT sector. Adequate and coordinated steps are urgently needed to ensure that the digital commerce sector in Bangladesh can enjoy sustainable growth in the years to come. Only then will the sector develop properly and employ many people.

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Startup landscape in Bangladesh: challenges and way forward

Shafa Tasneem and Eshrat Sharmin

With the vision to advancing towards 'Smart Bangladesh' by embracing digital transformation and innovation, the startup scene in Bangladesh is experiencing a rise. Along with demonstrating remarkable resilience and growth despite global uncertainty, the economy's new narrative driven by innovation is steadily taking its position. Bangladesh is progressively positioning itself as the next Asian Tiger Economy, buoyed by its burgeoning youth-driven consumer market, projected to rank among the world's top nine by 2030.

A 'startup' is typically a nascent, highly scalable venture concentrating on tech-driven solutions to local or global challenges with demonstrated demand. They infuse the economic landscape with fresh ideas and innovative approaches, typically commencing with substantial costs and minimal revenue, necessitating funding from diverse sources. Currently, the industry boasts over 1200 active startups, with over 200 emerging annually. Notably, over the past half-decade, the sector has witnessed a remarkable sixfold growth, generating over 1.5 million employment opportunities (LightCastle Partners, 2023).

The primary source of the funding in Bangladesh is from corporate investors, venture capital firms and Startup Bangladesh – the flagship venture fund by the Government of Bangladesh. According to UNESCAP (2022), FinTech, E-commerce, Mobility, HealthTech, AgriTech, and EdTech startups dominate 80% of the investments. Projections foresee annual startup fund raises surpassing USD 2.5 billion by 2030. The growth is fueled by government backing, a robust local ecosystem, and high ambition to foster five unicorns by 2025.

Recent trends, such as the \$72 million raised across 45 deals in 2023, signal a changing investment landscape amidst economic fluctuations. While analyzing the type of investors by deal count, venture capital (146) takes up the largest proportion followed by Angel Investors (123), Accelerator/Incubator (46), Corporates (44) etc. While analyzing the type of the funding volume by sector, financial services take up the largest share (64.12%). Notably, Bkash became the country's first unicorn by being the first company in Bangladesh to reach a billion-dollar valuation. Following the financial services, logistics and mobility (10.70%) and Ecommerce and Retail (9.02%) take up the second and third place. This trend indicates the evolving maturity and resilience of these sectors within the ecosystem.

Acknowledging the burgeoning startup landscape, the Bangladeshi government has taken proactive measures to cultivate the ecosystem. Initiatives like Innovation Design and Entrepreneurship Academy (IDEA) and Startup Bangladesh Limited offer vital support through training, mentorship, and financial aid to budding entrepreneurs. Furthermore, initiatives like Fund of Funds and the Startup National Policy aim to further enhance access to capital and streamline business processes.

Moreover, the Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority (BHTPA) actively nurtures entrepreneurship by providing dedicated support and resources to startups across the nation's hi-tech parks. Through initiatives such as outreach training programs, quarterly sessions with global venture capitalists, and events addressing policy and legal issues, BHTPA is nurturing a thriving

startup ecosystem. Over 100 startups have already benefited from the in-house incubation facilities. Furthermore, the UNIBATOR program aims to encourage innovative thinking among graduating students by guiding them towards solving national challenges through their academic projects, bridging the gap between academia and practical application.

However, despite the promising context, significant obstacles persist as well. Bangladesh performs poorly in various trade and logistics related indices which indicates challenges relating to fundraising, talent acquisition and technology adoption. There also persist regulatory complexities such as unfriendly policies and taxation difficulties, infrastructure shortfalls etc. Moreover, a disorganized policy framework across ministries inhibits startups' process of gaining approval. Limited intellectual property protection hinders growth of startups wanting to capitalize on their companies' unique selling proposition as reflected in Global Innovation Index ranking.

There is a crucial need for startup-oriented framework with incentives to simplify operations, reduce costs, and facilitate access to debt financing. UNESCAP (2022) recommended some multi-stakeholder agenda in Bangladesh Startup Ecosystem Assessment Report (SEAR) to develop a national startup policy framework:

Pipeline Building: Active promotion and advocacy for startups and entrepreneurship along with more incubators and accelerators for budding entrepreneurs

Startup-Inclusive Investment Regime: Continuous evaluation of the investment framework's flexibility for both local and international investors

Startup-Friendly Regulations: Adjusting investment rules, such as reducing lock-in periods for global investors, to enhance Bangladesh's competitiveness in the global investment market

Growth Facilitation via Tax Incentives: Introducing tax options for incentivizing startup investments in order to stimulate investment flow from both local and foreign sources

Investment-Friendly Business Environment: Improving Bangladesh's global image and simplifying administrative processes to improve compliance and facilitate new business establishment

Skills and Networking: Enhancing entrepreneurial skills through curriculum modifications and mentorship programs as well as mobilizing Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) as investors and mentors

Gender Lens Investing: Promoting gender lens investment through specialized programs and funds for women entrepreneurs along with encouraging gender inclusion in all stages of investing

Data for Progress Monitoring: Investing in platforms for quality data collection and standardization can assist stakeholders in market research and policy formulation.

In conclusion, Bangladesh's startup ecosystem holds tremendous promise if fueled by proper government support, robust local investment and proper infrastructure. Through collaboration, innovation, and strategic initiatives, Bangladesh can harness its entrepreneurial spirit to realize its full potential in the global startup landscape.

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SANEM and World Bank Organized a Seminar on "Is South Asia Experiencing Jobless Development?"



South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) and the World Bank jointly hosted a seminar titled "Is South Asia Experiencing Jobless Development?" on April 4, 2024 at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium, Mohakhali, Dhaka. The session was chaired by Dr Selim Raihan, Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM. Chief Economist for South Asia at the World Bank, Ms Franziska Ohnsorge presented the World Bank's April 2024 South Asia Development Update focusing on job resilience in South Asia. The panel discussion examined prospects for the region and explored risks to the outlook, including climate risks. The distinguished panelists were Dr Rubana Haque, Vice Chancellor of the Asian University for Women, Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor, Department of Economics at the University of Dhaka, and Research Director, SANEM, and Mr Bernard Haven, Senior Economist at the World Bank, Bangladesh. The panel discussed various issues related to employment.

Dr Selim Raihan Conducted a Session at the National Defence College



Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM was a guest speaker on "Trend of International Trade – Development" at the National Defence College (NDC) on 22 April 2024. NDC regularly conducts a "National Defence Course" for the members of the Armed Forces (Brigadier General and equivalent from Home and Abroad) and the equivalent members of Bangladesh Civil Services. This session was a part of the academic curriculum of the National Defence Course. In total, 95 Bangladeshi and Foreign Nationals were present at the session.

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Book Launch Event of "Is the Bangladesh Paradox Sustainable?" Held in Dhaka



South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) recently hosted a notable event to launch the book "Is the Bangladesh Paradox Sustainable?" on April 21, 2024, at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium in Mohakhali, Dhaka. The book, edited by Selim Raihan, François Bourguignon, and Umar Salam, and published by the esteemed Cambridge University Press sheds light on the development process of Bangladesh. Dr Mashiur Rahman, the Economic Affairs Advisor to the Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Professor Rehman Sobhan, Chairman of the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Dr S R Osmani, Professor of Development Economics at the University of Ulster, United Kingdom joined him as the esteemed Guests of Honour. Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM was the moderator of the event. Dr Umar Salam, Principle Economist of Oxford Policy Management and co-editor of the book virtually joined the event. Contributors of the book, Dr Mirza M Hasan, Senior Research Fellow at the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director of SANEM were also present at the event. Among the notable personalities who joined the event and shared their thoughts on the book were the Dr Zaidi Sattar, Chairman and Chief Executive of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI), Dr Mahbulul Mokaddem Akash, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka, and Dr Manzur Hossain, Research Director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Dr Selim Raihan was a Speaker at the Book Launch Event

Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) was a speaker at the book launch event of "Fifty Years of Bangladesh: Economy, Politics, Society and Culture." Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) hosted the event on 18 April 2024 at their office. The book was edited by Professor Rehman Sobhan, Chairman of CPD and Professor Rounaq Jahan, Distinguished Fellow of CPD. Dr Selim Raihan is one of the authors of the book.

Dr Selim Raihan Presented at a Workshop on Youth Budget Tracking



USAID and CARE organized a workshop on Youth Budget Tracking as a part of the Bijoyee Project on 24 April 2024 at the Bengal Blueberry in Gulshan, Dhaka. Dr Selim Raihan, Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, and Executive Director of SANEM delivered a presentation on the Framework for Youth-Sensitive Budgeting. This presentation aimed to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools necessary to assess budgetary allocations' impact on youth-related issues and ensure their inclusion in national development planning. This workshop was also facilitated by Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Democratic Budget Movement (DBM) and ActionAid Bangladesh. The final session of the day focused on effective advocacy strategies, including discussions on emerging youth priorities, evidence generation techniques, and campaigning strategies, culminating in a synthesis of insights and a call to action for advancing youth-centric policies and meaningful governance participation. Ms Afia Mubashira Tiasha, Senior Research Associate of SANEM and Mr Mohammad Asaduzzaman, Research Associate of SANEM joined the event as participants.

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha was a Panelist in the AMD-BARC Workshop

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) spoke in the workshop titled "Towards Inclusive Governance for Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Bangladesh: Securing the Food Systems of Asian Mega-Deltas for Climate and Livelihood Resilience." The event, co-hosted by the Asia Mega Deltas Initiative (AMD) and the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), was held on 30 April 2024 at the BARC Auditorium, Farm Gate, Dhaka. Dr Shamsul Alam, Former State Minister for Planning was the chief guest of the workshop. Special guests Dr Md. Mahmudur Rahman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Ms Keya Khan, Director General, Department of Women Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs also shared their remarks. Dr Ainun Nishat, Professor Emeritus of BRAC University, Dr M. Mokhlesur Rahman, Executive Director of Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS), Dr Benoy Kumar Barman, Senior Scientist of WorldFish and Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha were present as panellists. The event was chaired by Dr Sheikh Md Bakhtiar, Executive Chairman of BARC.