



**2023**

# **Annual Review for the year**

**Bangladesh Institute of Social  
Research (BISR) Trust**



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## SOCIETY, CULTURE AND SPORTS

The total population of Bangladesh in January 2023 was 172.1 million. BBS data shows that the population of Bangladesh has increased by 1.8 million (+ 1.0 per cent) between 2022 and 2023. Women make up 50.4 percent of Bangladesh's population, while men make up 49.6 per cent. At the beginning of 2023, 40.0 percent of Bangladesh's population lived in cities and 60.0 percent lived in rural areas.

The average life expectancy of people (male and female) in Bangladesh in 2023 is slightly higher than in 2022, and this growth rate is slightly higher for women (74.2) than men (72.3). The rate of increase in life expectancy is significant, where 9.8% of the total population is 60 years of age or older. The average age of the middle-aged people in Bangladesh is 27.8 which is almost unchanged in 2023 compared to 2022. However, comparing the average age with other countries, it can be seen that the middle-aged people in Bangladesh have a lot of manpower which is considered to be the biggest asset of a country.

The Ministry of Social Welfare has provided an old-age allowance of Tk 600 per month to 58.1 lakh people in 2023 with the aim of raising the status of the elderly in the family and society by providing social security to the elderly, poor and low-income or disabled people of the country. At present, all the beneficiaries are being given allowance through mobile financial service provider Nagad and bKash and agent banking through G2P system (Government to person). In the year 2023-24, a sum of Tk1711.40 crore has been provided as widow allowance at the rate of Taka 550 per month for 25.75 lakh persons. In addition, Bede (Gypsy) and Hijra (Third gender) people have been given allowance and for victims of acid attacks and disabled people, assistance programs have been carried out. The government is implementing a multi-dimensional and intensive program for the welfare and development of the backward and disadvantaged sections of the society, unemployed, landless, orphans, distressed, physically handicapped persons, poor, helpless patients, vulnerable children in both rural and urban areas across the country. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in the Eighth Five-Year Plan are being implemented.

Divorce in 2023 remains the same as in 2022 but the rate of increase is upward. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the divorce rate may increase to 1.46 per 1,000 people in 2023 compared to 0.7 per 1,000 people in 2022. In the Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2022 report, the National Statistical Agency said the divorce rate was higher in rural areas, which increased by 0.5 per 1,000 people in urban areas and 0.6 per 1,000 people in rural areas by 2023. Divorce petitions are being filed by more women than men.

At the beginning of 2023, there were 66.94 million internet users in Bangladesh, whereas in 2022 internet usage was 38.9 percent of the total population. Bangladesh had 44.70 million social media users in January 2023, which is equivalent to 26.0 percent of the total population. A total of 179.9 million cellular mobile connections were active in Bangladesh as of early 2023, a figure equivalent to 104.6 percent of the total population.

*According to Ookla's research, in 2023, Bangladesh's internet users had fixed internet connections speeding 34.85 Mbps and cellular network mobile connections speeding 13.95 Mbps. A2i's initiatives have won more than 17 awards at national and international levels throughout the year 2023 in recognition of technology-driven service innovation.*



Under the implementation of the Cabinet Division and the Department of Information and Communication Technology and supported by UNDP, Aspire to Innovate-A2i has been supporting various innovative initiatives to deliver modern IT-enabled, inclusive and accessible citizen services.

A2i's COVID-19 Telehealth Centre initiative has won the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Award-2023, the highest recognition for the IT sector in the international arena. Ekshop has won the United Nations SDG Digital Game Changer Award in recognition of reducing the distance between villages and cities by providing e-commerce services to the marginalized areas of the country. The National Intelligence Employment and Entrepreneurship (NICE) and Muktopath Platform won the Witsa 2023 Global Innovation and Technology Excellence Awards in recognition of the skill development and teaching of millions of people in the country through online platforms.

From rural areas to mofussil and urban areas, a large number of people in the country are now internet-dependent. According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), 147 million people received services through mobile, ISP (Internet Service Provider Company) and PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) throughout the year 2023. Out of this, the number of customers receiving internet service through mobile is 123 million, while the number of customers receiving internet service through ISP and PSTN is 133 million.

The main theme of the month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair in February 2023 was “Poro boi, gori desh, Bangabandhur Bangladesh.” According to the information center of Bangla Academy, books worth Tk 47 crore have been sold in the Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2023. A total of 3,750 new books were brought to the fair, compared to 3,416 books last year. Books of all institutions, including Bangla Academy, were sold at 25 percent commission. In the 31 days of Bangla Academy’s Fair in 2022, books worth Rs 1.34 crore were sold. On the other hand, 63,53,463 readers, visitors and writers visited the fair, according to the statistics of the archway set up at the fair.

Firstly, Bangladesh has continued its remarkable journey as one of the world's leading garment exporters in terms of apparel exports. Despite the global economic uncertainty, the country's exports in this sector have increased significantly. According to the data of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the industry's exports in 2023 increased by 4.35 percent compared to the previous year (January to November) to \$42.83 billion.

Although the sector had negative growth in October (- 13.93%) and November (- 7.45%), the industry has made efforts to bounce back.

2023 sets a significant landmark for the knitwear sector in the European Union (EU) market. Bangladesh has become the top knitwear exporter in the EU for the first time (January-September 2023). Bangladesh's apparel imports from the European Union have surpassed China's.

It's been a great year in the fashion industry. Many people did not have the opportunity to focus on fashion for the next two years of the Corona epidemic. From that point of view, there have been many changes or innovations in fashion this year. However, throughout the year, there has been a focus on introducing the old in a new manner.

Bangladesh has celebrated the year 2023 as the most eventful year to remember. Like the rest of the world, the cultural and entertainment scene in Bangladesh had a lot of exciting events throughout the year, and there was no shortage of enthusiasm across the country about what the country's superstars, artists, and cultural mediums had to offer.

The most talked about film of 2023 was "Priyotama" directed by Himel Ashraf starring Shakib Khan. The film is topping the charts and after the success of Shakib Khan, his remuneration has been set at Tk 1 crore, making him one of the most liked and talked about actors of this year.

For a long time, there was no response to the film in the theaters. However, in the last year, some films have created a storm among the film lovers of the country. The audience was seen thronging the theaters to watch the movie. The country's halls were especially full of films released on Eid. It can be said that apart from being crowded, the film industry has changed a lot.

More than 50 films will be released in 2023. Some of these films have been loved by the audience. The most talked about film of the year was, Mujib: The Maker of a Nation. The film is based on the life of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Ever since the film was announced, fans have been eagerly waiting for the film's release.

Bangabandhu's biopic was released in more than 153 theaters across the country. The film was released not only in Bangladesh, but all over India. The film was directed by Shyam Benegal and co-produced by India and Bangladesh. The music industry will revive in 2023. The songs of the films are rocking one after another. The year 2023 was a year of fulfillment for music lovers.

In the era of sports in 2023, it has been an eventful year for the Bangladeshi women's and men's teams in both cricket and football. Among the many challenges in both sports, women have attained and maintained a commendable place for their respective sports, while men have also been promising in various fields.

On February 23, the women's U-20 football team achieved a historic victory in the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship. The team displayed exceptional skill and teamwork, winning the title with a 3-0 win over Nepal. This achievement marks a significant milestone in the development of women's football in the country, as the Bangladesh women's team now boasts of SAFF Championships in three categories: U-17, U-19 and Senior.

Bangladesh men's football team has qualified for the semi-finals of the 2023 SAFF Championship. Anisur Rahman Zico was awarded for the best goalkeeper of the tournament.

Although the men's football team failed to qualify for the AFC Cup, they were able to show their best skills in the FIFA World Cup qualifying games.

Bangladesh women's cricket team won against tough opponents in 2023. Although, in February, Bangladesh women's cricket team were at the bottom of their group rankings in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, they were able to bounce back from there by showing supreme performances. Against the Indian team, Bangladesh lost the T20 series but drew the ODI series, which was a big achievement.

The U-19 men's cricket team added to our success by winning the Asia Cup. The young talents by showing the hunger to win, brought back hope for the future of Bangladesh cricket in 2023. Although the World Cup failure was there, 2023 cricket was active in various off-field incidents. It had an impact on the game. This year, Bangladesh has played 46 matches and won 23 matches. They have won 21 games in 2018. Despite losing in the one-day cricket, the team has seen success in the other two versions. The biggest success was brought by the youths. One of the biggest achievements was having Nazmul Hossain Shanto as the captain. And the biggest loss is the sudden announcement of Tamim's retirement. As in 2022, the pacers have shown great dominance in the bowling unit of Bangladesh in 2023. Bangladesh's pace duo of Shariful Islam and Taskin Ahmed led the pace attack. In 49 matches this year, the bowling average of Bangladesh's bowlers is 28.23, which is next to India (23.75). Bangladesh came fifth in the points table in terms of wickets. Bangladesh bowlers took 348 wickets in 292 innings in 1992.5 overs. Bangladesh is followed by Pakistan, South Africa and the West Indies. Bangladesh is also in the fifth position in the bowlers' economy.

## WOMEN AND CHILDREN

According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual report on 'Global Gender Gap' for 2023, Bangladesh ranks first in South Asia with a score of 72.2 percent for nine consecutive years, demonstrating remarkable progress in multiple sectors. Bangladesh's position in the global gender equality index has been upgraded by 12 steps. In the 2023 report, Bangladesh ranked 59th out of the 146 countries in the global index of gender equality. Bangladesh's score this year is 0.722 compared to 0.714 in 2022, with some progress in gender equality.





According to the latest data published by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad from January to December 2023, a total of 2937 cases of abuse and sexual violence against children and women were reported across the country. Although there is a provision of death penalty for rape, the rate of such incidents has not decreased. According to the council, a total of 639 women and girls were raped during this period, of which 431 were young girls. Of the reported cases, 140 women were gang-raped, of which 69 were minor girls. Of them, 34 were killed after being raped, 25 of them were teenage girls, and 14 others, including nine young women, committed suicide.

One of the areas where progress has been made is education. Much gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary education, and in recent years, literacy among women aged 15-24 has increased to 95.8 per cent, according to data provided by the Demography and Health Wing, BBS. Young girls are facing barriers to access education, especially in rural areas, but women's participation in the workforce has increased.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) survey published in March 2023, the female work force participation rate is 42.68%, (38% was in 2021; 40% was in 2022) which is still much lower than that of men (82.4%). Moreover, many women often work in the informal sector of the economy at low pay, where the gender pay gap remains a persistent problem.

Women hold 23.2 percent of the seats in Bangladesh's parliament which is the highest in South Asia. 23% of members of local government bodies are now women, of which 15,704 are elected. This positive change is on track, but there is still work to be done to ensure inclusion at all levels of government

Only 7.2 percent of business owners in Bangladesh are women. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data, there were 2.9 million women-owned SMEs in Bangladesh in 2023, which is about 24% of all SMEs in the country. In addition, according to research by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), about 8 million individuals work in women-led SMEs, accounting for 10% of Bangladesh's employment.

According to a recent government report, the total workforce of the country is 7.34 crore, out of which 2.59 crore are women. In 2023, women's participation in the workforce was 42.67%, with women's participation increasing greatly in the garment industry, microcredit programs, and rural development.

The government is setting up community clinics across the country, from where women and children can get the necessary services according to their convenience. The government has taken an initiative to set up a community clinic for every 6,000 people. So far, 14,878 community clinics have been established, 80 percent of which are women and children.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics report dated 19 July 2023, 3.96 million children (51.79% boys 60.14% (1,068,212) aged 5-17 years are engaged in child labour. The previous survey, published in 2022, showed that the number of children aged 5 to 17 years was 39.94 million, of which 4.3 per cent (1,698,894) were engaged

in child labour, while 75.35 per cent (1,280,195) were engaged in hazardous child labour.

75.94 percent (30,349,052) of children in the age group of 5 to 17 years work in rural areas, but the rate of child labour is relatively high in both rural and urban areas; 4.4 per cent in rural areas and 4.6 per cent in urban areas, while those engaged in hazardous child labour is 2.7 per cent in rural areas and 2.4 per cent in urban areas. In terms of the economic sector, 1.27 million children were engaged in the service sector, 1.19 million in the industrial sector and 1.08 million in agriculture.

## ECONOMICS

Over the last 15 years, Bangladesh has achieved significant milestones in economic development and is continuously striving to continue its achievements. In 2023, the escalating conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to an increase in the price of goods and services, faced with several major economic obstacles, including a slight shortage in the supply of goods and a crisis in the dollar.

The GDP in 2022-23 increased to Tk 44,392,733 million from Tk 39,717,164 million in FY 2021-22. In US dollar terms, the GDP in 2021-22 was 460,219 million, which declined to 453,852 million in 2022-23. Despite this slight decrease, the GDP growth rate was almost close to the previous year, (7.10% in 2021-22 and 6.03% in 2022-23). The per capita GDP has increased from Tk 231,861 in 2021-22 to Tk 259,919 in 2022-23, demonstrating positive economic development.

Item	2021-22	2022-23(p)
GDP (Million Taka)	39,717,164	44,392,733
GDP (Million US\$)	460,219	453,852
GDP growth rate	7.10	6.03
Per Capita GDP (Taka)	231,861	259,919
Per Capita GDP (US \$)	2,687	2,657
Growth rate (per capita GDP)	11.07	12.1

Source: BBS (2023a)

*P denotes provisional*

The contribution of the agriculture sector to the total economy of Bangladesh in the fiscal year 2022-23 was about 11.38%, a slight decrease from the previous year (11.66%, 2022). At the same time, the share of the industrial sector increased from 34.27% to 35.55%, while the share of the service sector remained stable at 53.07%, according to BBS data. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Bangladesh is the third largest producer of rice in the world. It also mentioned that Bangladesh is among the top ten countries in the world in terms of production of rice, lentils, potatoes, onions, tea, various fruits and 22 other agricultural products.

Throughout the 2023 financial year, product price inflation was noticeable. The average inflation rate, especially in food, has risen steadily during this period.

Food inflation was around 8.71% in June 2023 as compared to 6.05% in June 2022. According to Bangladesh Bank data, a similar trend was seen in food as well as other items, with inflation rising to 9.39% from 6.31% in June 2022. The results published by Bangladesh Bank are quite different from the data published in the Trending Economy or Real Time Scenario. But in terms of overall inflation, it is not much different. According to Trending Economy, the rate of inflation in food is around 12% and the overall inflation rate is 9.02% which is not different from the data published by Bangladesh Bank. The ongoing inflation indicates that the government has to take policies to reduce the pressure on the public by coordinating Financial and revenue policies.

In the economic scenario of Bangladesh, consumption, savings and investment play a major role. According to BBS data, the expenditure on goods and services was 74.78 per cent of the total GDP in 2022, slightly down from 73.98 per cent in 2023. Personal spending, which is a large part of overall spending, was 69.08% in 2022, and slightly reduced to 68.23% in 2023. In contrast, government spending increased slightly from 5.70% to 5.75% in 2023. In terms of savings, domestic savings as a percentage of GDP witnessed an upward trend, increasing from 25.22% in 2022 to 26.02% in 2023. National savings, encompassing both internal and external savings, increased, from 29.35% to 30.22%. There has been a slight decrease in the amount of investment, while the rate of investment as a percentage of GDP was 32.05% in 2022, reduced to 31.25% in 2023. The decline is visible in both the public and private sectors. Private investment declined from 24.52% in 2022 to 23.64% in 2023. Public investment, on the other hand, represents public spending on infrastructure and development projects, which has increased from 7.53% in 2022 to 7.61% in 2023. Overall, private and public spending rates have fallen as a result of the economy contracting slightly, which is not positive for the overall growth rate. The government can shift its strategic spending from mega infrastructure projects to more systemic and technology-based projects to boost economic growth.

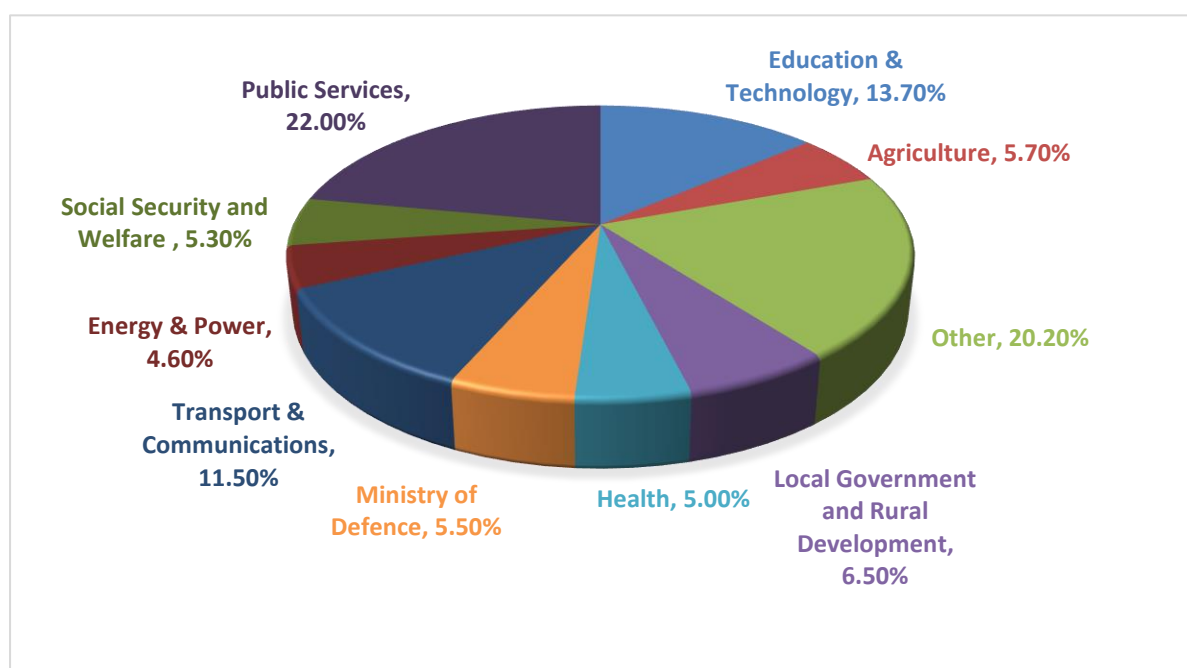
According to the BBS report, in fiscal year 2022-23, net foreign investment (FDI) inflows amounted to US \$3, 249.68 million, which decreased to US \$189.95 million compared to fiscal year 2020-21. It is necessary to identify the economic, political, and environmental or policy problems that have reduced FDI and take action accordingly.

According to the BBS, Bangladesh's economic and trade dynamics have seen modest changes between 2022 and 2023. Tax revenue savings as a percentage of GDP increased marginally from 7.54% in 2022 to 7.79% in 2023, while revenue net savings also increased marginally from 0.88% to 0.97% during the same period. In the case of foreign trade, a relative decline in the proportion of imports to GDP was visible (19.2%, 2023 which was 20.9% in 2022,) indicating a contraction in imports relative to the size of the economy. On the contrary, exports as a percentage of GDP showed an increase, increasing from 12.88% in 2022 to 13.44% in 2023, indicating an expansion of export activity in proportion to overall economic output. Moreover, the Balance of payments (BOP) has shown significant improvement. The current BOP as a percentage of GDP contracted from - 3.89% in 2022 to - 1.56% in 2023, indicating a possible reduction in the deficit or even surplus. The trade balance (exports minus imports) ratio of GDP showed an improvement from - 8.02% to - 5.75% over the same period, indicating a reduction in the trade deficit relative to the size of the economy. In fiscal year 2023, total



exports reached \$52,340 million, up from \$49,245 million in fiscal year 2022. In contrast, total imports fell from \$69,495 million in FY23 to \$82,495 million in FY22. Exports increased by 6.28 per cent while imports decreased by 15.76 per cent in FY2023. Although there is a balance of payments (BOP) for the time being, the economy can be under great pressure for many reasons.

The remittance inflow of workers increased by \$305.03 million in 2023. The depreciation of taka and the introduction of a new incentive scheme by banks can be identified as the main reasons for this increase in remittances in July-December 2023 fiscal year. The new scheme, effective from October 22, 2023, adds another 2.5 per cent incentive provided by the government in addition to the existing 2.5 per cent incentive. The overall international foreign exchange reserves stood at \$31, 202.98 million at the end of June 2023, which is sufficient to pay for 4.6 months of potential import costs. The current reserves indicate a decline from the record amount of \$41, 826.73 million at the end of June 2022. There can be various reasons for the downward flow of remittances, but for this it is necessary to identify specific problems.



In fiscal year 2023, volatility within the global foreign exchange market increased significantly compared to the previous year. In response, Bangladesh Bank sold a significant amount of U.S. dollars to stabilize the foreign exchange market, totaling \$13, 578.20 million. On the other hand, it bought only \$193.00 million throughout the 2023 fiscal year. Despite these efforts, the annual average exchange rate in fiscal year 2023 was recorded at Tk 99.46 per U.S. dollar, marking a significant devaluation compared to Tk 86.30 per U.S. dollar observed in fiscal year 2022. Moreover, the exchange rate for the last month of the year stands at Tk 110 / USD. Lack of practice of the pegging system can be said to be the reason behind these problems.

According to the BBS, as of June 2023, Bangladesh's total external debt stood at US \$98.94 billion. Out of which, long-term debt was US \$82.90 billion (83.80% of total debt)

and short-term debt was US \$16.03 billion (16.20% of total debt). Public sector debt reached US \$76.68 billion, accounting for 77.50 per cent of total debt. The private sector debt in 2022 was US \$22.26 billion, which will become 22.50% of the total debt by the end of June 2023. Total foreign aid in 2023 decreased by \$757.68 million, a decrease of 7.57 percent year-on-year. Grants accounted for 7.48 per cent of NEET foreign aid received in FY2023. In terms of the ratio of debt to GDP, the national debt is at a reasonable level compared to many other countries. On the contrary, economic indicators reveal that the economy is under pressure due to national and international political ambiguity.

According to the MoF, Bangladesh has announced a budget of around Tk 7.61 trillion for the fiscal year 2023-24, marking a 15 percent increase in expenses compared to the previous year's revised budget. The development allocation is Tk 2.78 trillion, which is 15 per cent higher than the revised budget for 2022-23. Of this allocation, Tk 2.63 trillion will be allocated to the Annual Development Programme (ADP). Revenue receipts are estimated to be Tk. 5,00,000 crores of the total budget, an increase of 15.4 per cent over the 2022-23 budget. The overall deficit in the proposed budget is Tk. 261,785 crore, which is equivalent to 5.2 per cent of GDP.

As of December 2022, the total listed debt stood at Tk 1206 billion, which increased to Tk 1553 billion as of September 2023. This indicates an increase in non-performing loans (NPLs) by about Tk 347 billion or 28 per cent during the period. Specifically, for state-owned commercial banks, the volume of non-performing loans increased by Tk 93 billion, or 16 percent, compared to the same period.

According to BBS data, the poverty rate in Bangladesh has come down to 18.7 percent nationally, while it is 20.5 percent in rural areas and 14.7 percent in urban areas. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2023 report, the extreme poverty rate stands at 5.6 percent. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), Bangladesh ranks 129th out of 191 countries in the 2021/2022 Human Development Index (HDI), which enlists the country in the index of 'Moderate Human Development'. Bangladesh's HDI value improved to 0.661 from 0.655 in the previous year, with the country ranking 133rd out of 189 countries in the 2020 report. The total labor force of Bangladesh consists of 73.05 million people, of which 25.78 million are women. The unemployment rate is 3.36 percent, which is better than many like-minded countries.

Income inequality increased slightly, with the value of the Gini coefficient increasing from 0.482 to 0.499 according to the 2022 Household Income and

Expenditure Survey. Bangladesh has taken an important step towards a universal pension scheme by passing the Universal Pension Management Bill-2023. The initiative, known as the Universal Pension Scheme (UPS), targets the entire population above the age of 18, providing lifetime pension benefits from the age of 60. Initially, four schemes - Pragati, Suraksha, Parivartan and Pravasi - have been launched. People aged 18-50 can join, while those over 50 can also take part, receiving a pension after ten years of contributions. A National Identity Card (NID) card is required for registration, the monthly installment of which is payable through mobile financial services. Migrant workers without NID cards can register with a valid passport, and each beneficiary has an account in the Sonali Bank.

In 2023, Bangladesh made significant progress in several important infrastructure projects. The work on the Padma Bridge has been completed marking a significant milestone. The Uttara to Motijheel route of the metro rail system has become accessible to the public. Some parts of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway are now operational, which is improving the transportation system in the capital. Another notable achievement was the opening of the Bangabandhu Tunnel under the Karnaphuli River in Chittagong. Besides, the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport has been inaugurated, which is enhancing connectivity. The Asian Development Bank expects these developments to stimulate investment across the country, resulting in a GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent in 2023-24.

In general, it is seen that Bangladesh is moving from a least developed country to a middle-income country. Meanwhile, the country is facing short-term obstacles that stem from internal and external socio-economic and political problems. A systematic approach and timely policies can help the country overcome this critical situation.

## POLITICS

As in the past year, this year also there were various tensions in politics. A race is on between the ruling party and the opposition to win the upcoming parliamentary elections. Throughout the year, the main opposition party BNP and like-minded parties in the field continuously held rallies in the districts and divisions as part of their efforts to wage a non-violent movement. Along with that, the government party also held competitive rallies throughout the year, talking about peacekeeping. The main opposition party had been demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as well as the resignation of the government and holding elections under a neutral government. Where they had previously demanded an election under a neutral caretaker government, this year they have moved away from that demand and demanded an election under a neutral government.

The ruling party tried to keep the opposition in check, much like a field guard, so that they do not cause any mass riots. Throughout the year, especially at the end of the year, they started guarding at different places in Dhaka. Law enforcement agencies were also on high alert.

And at the end of the year the opposition party called for continuous blockades, hartals and non-cooperation movements. It affected people's lives in different ways. Temporarily, the movement of long-distance vehicles outside Dhaka was disrupted.

In addition, during blockades and hartals, there were various violent incidents such as burning of vehicles, especially buses, most of which were parked on the roads, setting fire to

trains three times, uprooting railway lines at one place, unbolting railway lines, etc. The most heart-wrenching incident was setting fire on the Benapole Express near Kamalapur railway station, where a mother and her infant child were burnt to death. Around 10 people were also killed in the violence, some of whose bodies could not be identified. Hundreds of cars were burned at various times throughout the year. However, no neutral account of this damage was found.

The brutal killings of a policeman while on duty at the final rally of the main opposition party on October 28, aimed at toppling the government, caused a huge stir at home and abroad after its visuals were circulated in the electronic media and social media. Many national and international organizations talked about moving politics forward by avoiding such activities. About 30 journalists were also tortured on that day. The Chief Justice's house was also attacked by miscreants, which has never happened before. Apart from this, the hospital of Rajarbagh Police Lines was also attacked, which has never been seen before.

Several top BNP leaders were detained before and after these actions. Besides, BNP leaders at different levels were detained throughout the year on charges of violence in the previous movement. Some of the leaders were swiftly tried and convicted in old cases, making them ineligible for national elections. Some critics have criticized these sentences.

The opposition's program was conducted quietly throughout the year, but became more confrontational at the time of election as November approached. This has given rise to a new kind of tension in politics.

The main opposition and its like-minded parties in the field continued throughout the year to demand elections under a neutral government and the release of the party's main leader. However, no progress was made in this regard. The party's acting president carried out various virtual political activities from abroad. The media coverage of the leader was somewhat limited due to the court's order. As a result, his speech which was widely publicized earlier, especially through electronic media, stopped. But continued limitedly on Facebook.

The government continued its efforts to provide a free, fair, acceptable and participatory election, especially in the face of various diplomatic U.S. pressures, both overt and covert, this year. Meanwhile, the campaign by the opposition parties that more restrictions could come at different times did not happen. The government did not appear to abandon the US side and retreat into any other camp but instead spent the year maintaining a balanced relationship with India, China, and Russia.

There were no mass killings during the year. Despite the government's failures on many issues this year, such as commodity prices and power supply disruption, the opposition parties have not been able to make much use of it. In the field of politics, the opposition parties could not show any innovation, rather the announcement of not participating in the election at the end of the year disappointed the party leaders and activists, especially the election hopefuls. In the end, the announcement of not going to the election created a kind of dilemma in national politics.

Throughout the year, the big leaders of the small parties affiliated with the main opposition party have made some statements that have once again caught the attention of the citizens. A large part of the population had not shown interest in politics.

In the past year, a few political parties have emerged. Reza Kibria has not yet found much popularity in politics, although some people hoped that his politics would have some impact



on the country's politics. Although a few intellectuals sometimes gave speeches focusing on some problems, it did not have much impact on the country's economy.

No new polarization was seen in the political arena. In the end, it didn't last long. Violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts continued more or less throughout the year. The steps taken by the government to address this have led to some improvement in the situation.

Although some of the failures of the government were discussed by different classes of intellectuals or the elite class, it did not have much effect on the government's policy or strategy. In some cases, such as commodity prices, the government has identified some problems and promised to solve them on priority. There has been no major fall in the popularity of Sheikh Hasina this year.

In the national and international arena, Sheikh Hasina seems to be more politically astute than ever before. Democracy is seen to be carried on in a controlled manner, giving more importance to development. No one has been asked to leave the ministry until the end of the year, but the ministry had hoped to drop some other figures, especially the trade minister.

## CRIME

In 2023, as in previous years, various types of crimes and incidents causing social instability have been observed. During the year, traditional crimes such as murder, rape, women and child abuse, cybercrime, robbery, drug smuggling, extortion, fraud, political violence, persecution of religious minorities, money laundering, torture of journalists, extrajudicial killings, and death in police custody, kidnapping etc., continued to occur.



Some newness in the nature and tactics of crime have been observed in this year. According to data from an international organization, the crime rate in Bangladesh this year is 63.9 percent per lakh. There has been a slight decrease in the number of murders this year as compared to the previous year i.e. the murder rate was 2.37 per lakh this year which was marginally lower than the previous year. According to data from an international organization, the murder rate in Bangladesh in 2022 was 2.50. The increase in violence against women and children this year has been highlighted in various news media and studies. According to statistics from the Ain o Shalish Kendro, at least 574 women filed complaints of rape as of December. And at least 33 of them (5.75%) were murdered after being raped.

According to the statistics of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, there were 2927 (85%) incidents of violence against women in 2023, which was 3440 in the previous year. In 2023, there were 591 rapes and 14 suicides due to rape. Hence, we can conclude that, violence against women has decreased by 15% this year. In addition, there were 52 dowry deaths, 8 murders of domestic workers, 13 cases of violence against domestic workers and 4 suicides of domestic workers.

Also, with the expansion of the internet in the year, women are heavily involved in online business and most of them manage it well. However, women have been included in various types of fraud or women themselves have been involved. Involvement of women in drug trafficking, money laundering etc have also been observed. So, women are facing a lot of problems. In 2023, 13 women and girls were trafficked.

The rate of cyber crime during this year was remarkable. One of the notable incidents this year was the arrest of a gang involved in leaking the question paper of the medical college admission test. A portion of those who became doctors using this method have also been caught.

Various types of cybercrimes, including debit-credit card fraud, spreading offensive photos of women police, leaking question papers online, promoting online militancy, and online gambling, are observed throughout the year. The media also reported the use of online and social media as a means of deception, sexual harassment, as well as new types of crimes.

The prevalence of drug use continued throughout the year. Now the drug has spread to different parts of the country. And there are various reports throughout the year about the involvement of various people, politicians, law enforcement agencies with this. There was no trace of the gold kept at the airport. 5841.66 gm were stolen from the custody there.

Various tactics of extortion and cheating continued. There were allegations of extortion, fraud in the recruitment of jobs under the fake identity of police and other officials. Apart from this, various gangs extort money from many people by talking about income from home. There were some fraud allegations against e-commerce businesses and online marketplaces throughout the year.

There have been several incidents of political violence throughout the year. In particular, at the end of the year, various incidents such as trains, buses and some other cars were set on fire. Some of these heart-wrenching incidents include a mother on a train burning to death with her infant child in the middle of the fire. Apart from this, a policeman was brutally beaten to death in front of everyone, which was circulated on various social media.

During the year, some hartals, blockades and the last non-cooperation movement were called which caused some disruption in public life. Some incidents of communal violence have been reported.

## FARMERS AND LABORERS

According to the latest report of the Agricultural census of Bangladesh 2022, the total number of households in Bangladesh is 35.5 million, which remains unchanged as of 2023. Out of this, the number



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of agricultural households is 1 crore

68 lakh. This clearly shows that the total number of agricultural households is less than half and is decreasing day by day. Besides, there are 40.24 lakh landless households and 67.63 lakh households which are dependent on others' land. The total area of fallow land is 4.31 lakh hectares and the total cultivable area is about 78 lakh hectares. On the other hand, according to the data published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP in the fiscal year 2022-23 has been estimated at 11.50 percent, which was 11.50 percent in the previous fiscal year. Since the production in the industrial sector was disrupted during the year and due to more emphasis on the agricultural sector, efforts were continued to increase production despite various adversities.

In the financial year 2022-23, the total subsidy allocation for agriculture was more than one lakh ten thousand crore rupees. In the last fiscal year's budget, it was Tk 81,000 crore and revised to Tk 94,000 crore. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, only 4.64 percent of the total budget was proposed for the agriculture sector, but for the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of Tk 35,374 crore was proposed for the agriculture, food, fisheries and livestock sector.

Agriculture is the most affected by natural disasters. In 2023, two cyclones named Midhili and Migzoum caused extensive damage to Aman paddy in some areas of Bangladesh. On 9 May 2023, Cyclone Mokha and on 21 October 2023, Cyclone Hamun hit the coast of Bangladesh, which had a lot of impact on agriculture. Apart from that,

among other crops, agriculture suffers the most in various natural disasters including heavy rains, floods, droughts, heavy fogs, floods.

Even in 2023, about 70 percent of the total population of Bangladesh was mainly dependent on agriculture for livelihood and 45 percent of the labor force was employed in the agricultural sector with a contribution of only 11.50 percent to the GDP. Protection of agricultural land, which is the cornerstone of Bangladesh's economy and food security, is of paramount importance in the law. The law includes strict provisions to protect fertile land from unauthorized use, so as to ensure sustainable food crop production. Above all, special provisions have been outlined to conserve ecologically sensitive areas such as wetlands, forests and river systems, recognizing their important role in protecting biodiversity and ecological balance. The draft law proposes 10 classifications for land zoning. These are villages, farms, residential, commercial, wetlands, rivers, forests, mountains, roads, industries and religious places.

After achieving self-sufficiency in food production, the trend of increasing production continues. While the total foodgrain production was 32.89 million metric tonnes in 2008-09, it will increase to 47.78 million metric tonnes in 2022-23. Another crops production has also been successful. In the last 15 years, the production of maize has increased almost 9 times, potato 2 times, pulses 4 times, oilseeds 2.5 times and vegetables 8 times. As a result, the success of Bangladesh's agriculture has been appreciated in the world. Bangladesh is among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of production of 22 agricultural products; i.e. 3rd in rice production, 3rd in vegetable and onion production, 2nd in jute production, 4th in tea production and 7th in potato and mango production.

The production of rice in 2008-09 was 31.3 million tonnes which will increase to more than 40 million tonnes in 2022-23. Wheat production in 2008-09 was 8.49 lakh tonnes and 1.70 lakh tonnes in 2022-23, maize was 7 lakh tonnes which is now 64 lakh tonnes, potato has increased from 5 lakh tonnes to 14 lakh tonnes, vegetables has increased from 30 lakh tonnes to 22 million tonnes.

In the last 15 years, a total of 699 improved and high-yielding varieties including eco-friendly varieties have been developed and 708 technologies have been developed. There are 80 varieties of rice among them. The price of fertilizers was reduced and adjusted such as TSP from 80 Taka to 27 Taka, DAP from 90 Taka to 21 Taka and MOP from 70 Taka to 20 Taka in several phases by the farmer friendly government. In addition, urea has been supplied to farmers at a subsidized rate of Tk 27 per kg. From



2009 to 2023, a total of Tk. 1,28,915 crore has been provided as subsidy in the fertilizer, power, etc. sectors. In 2008-09, only Tk 5,178 crore was spent in this sector. In the fiscal year 2022-23, Tk 25,998 crore has been spent on subsidies, according to a press release of the ministry.

According to the Bangladesh Bank, the farmers of the country are paying more than the amount of loans taken from the bank, including interest. Farmers have borrowed Tk 32,829 crore from banks in the last fiscal year (2022-23). On the contrary, they have paid Tk 33,10 crore. Earlier, farmers also paid more than the loan taken from the bank.

The most discussed topic in 2023 was the increase in the price of eggs and potatoes. At the end of the year, the price of potatoes suddenly rose to 60-80 taka, which went beyond the purchasing power of ordinary people. At the same time, the price of eggs has increased by Tk 70-80 per 4 pieces. The market price of vegetables was also high throughout the year, there was no vegetable, the price of which was less than 50 Taka. The government had fixed the price of potatoes at Tk 35-36 per kg, but in 2023, potatoes were sold at Tk 60. On September 14, 2023, the Ministry of Commerce fixed the retail price of potato at Tk 35-36 per kg. According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, the annual demand for potatoes in the country is 85-90 lakh tons.

In the financial year 2022-23, the country produced 1.12 crore tonnes of potatoes. The president of the Cold Storage Association said, "Although the government has said that more than 10 million tons of potatoes will be produced this year, in reality not more than 8-8.5 million tons of potatoes have been produced." According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the country produced 99 lakh tons of potatoes in 2020-21 and exported 68,773 tons; in 2021-22, the production was 12 lakh tons and exported 78,910 tons and in 2022-23, the production was 11 lakh tons and exported 13,000 tons till January. It has been observed that most of the farmers sell potatoes at the field level and its wholesale price is not more than Tk 10-12 per kg. However, those who store in cold storage get a good price at some times of the year.

At different times of the year, workers in different parts of the country hold protests in support of their demands. Visiting the factory 'Tusuka', which was affected by the workers' movement in Konabari, Gazipur, on the afternoon of November 11, 2023, a police officer said that there is labor discontent in the garment sector over the increase of workers' wages. We have information that 123 factories have carried out more or less destructive activities.

The US reiterated the recent labor movement in Bangladesh and their expectations. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has announced an initiative on labor issues to engage with governments, workers, the private sector, civil society, labor unions, and trade unions to protect workers around the world and establish internationally recognized labor rights.

Mentioning that the government's announced wage has been accepted by the owners despite hundreds of odds, a BGMEA leader said despite various crises, including inflation in the garment sector, the minimum wage of Tk 12,500 announced by the government on November 7 has been accepted by the owners. BISR proposed to raise the minimum wage to Tk 13,700, but the government reduced it by Tk 1,200.

This has been implemented from December 1 this year. Mentioning that the minimum wage in the garment sector has increased by 316 percent from 2010 to 2023, the BGMEA president said the minimum wage in 2013 was Tk 3,000. And in 2023, this wage will come to Tk 12,500. Since 2013, the minimum wage has increased by 5% each year.

By the end of 2023, there was a multi-faceted tension between employers, workers and the government regarding the increase in wages of workers. Clashes broke out between the workers and protesters, resulting in the death of several workers. The international community was also very active in this regard and the US administration also made various statements about labor leader Kalpana Akter. Although the government has agreed to deal with them as soon as possible, the efforts of various international communities are still continuing.

The workers have been agitating for various demands, including inclusion in grade 1 to 4 in the new pay structure fixed by the government, fixation of pay according to Schedule A and Schedule B, 8 hours instead of 10 hours of working day, basic pay according to government rules, overtime rate according to government rules and refraining from retrenching the workers who are agitating for their rights.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

In 2023, the Global Centre for Climate Mobility awarded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with the Asia Climate Mobility Champion Leader Award in recognition of her vocal leadership in promoting and expanding climate action. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received the international award in recognition of her leadership of Bangladesh's ongoing efforts to address climate change and its challenges. Botswana, Suriname and

Palau were also awarded in the Africa and Pacific region. On the other hand, Bangladesh received the Global Centre on Adaptation Championship Award in the category of Innovation in Developing Finance at the ongoing Climate Summit COP-28 in Dubai. This initiative is a joint effort carried out under the Local Government Climate Change Project and implemented by the Local Government, which is supported by the European Union, Sweden, Denmark, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Development Programme.

In 2023, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023-2050 of Bangladesh was prepared by the government and submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. The NAP will be an important document in the future when nations implement adaptation activities in accordance with the UNFCCC process. The NAP will highlight the vision of building a climate resilient nation through the adoption of effective strategies to stimulate a strong society, values and sustainable economic growth. To implement this vision, the NAP has established the following six goals (1) ensuring protection against climate change and disasters; (2) developing climate resilient agriculture; (3) building climate-smart cities; (4) protecting nature for adaptation; (5) integrating adaptation into planning; and (6) ensuring capacity building and innovation in adaptation. To achieve these goals, NAP has defined 23 adaptation strategies and initially identified 123 activities (including 90 high-priority and 23 moderate-priority) covering 8 sectors and considering 11 climate stress areas across the country.

On 5 March 2023, the Environmental Protection Rules 2023 were formulated by the Department of Environment under the Bangladesh Environmental Protection Act, 1995. With the repeal of the Environmental Protection Regulations 1997, the proposed 2023 was taken into effect immediately. The policy details the specific procedures to be followed by the industry for the purpose of complying with the requirement of obtaining notification, environmental and locational clearances (green, yellow, orange and red categories) for remediation of environmental pollution or degradation.

An allocation of Tk 37,51 crore has been proposed in the budget for 2023-24 for 25 climate-related ministries and divisions to tackle climate change. The rate of climate inclusion in the total budget is 8.99 percent. In the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024, Tk 1,639 crore has been allocated for the environment, forest and climate sectors. The budget for this sector was 1501 crore for the previous fiscal year. The size is slightly larger than what was allocated for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Along with 193 countries of the world, our country also celebrated Earth Day with the main slogan "Invest in our Earth." The day is celebrated in Bangladesh in keeping with the "Clean Dhaka, Green Dhaka" campaign, which is organized by the Dhaka North City Corporation. The campaign aims to raise awareness of environmental issues and promote sustainable practices, such as waste segregation, composting and tree planting.

Every year on June 5, the world comes together to celebrate World Environment Day. It is a global event that aims to raise awareness of environmental challenges and inspire action to protect our planet. In 2023, the main theme was "Solve Plastic Pollution" and the slogan was "Eliminate Plastic Pollution" which demands to be focused in Bangladesh. Strong measures are being taken to deal with these problem and various programs have been initiated and implemented at the national and regional levels. At the national level, the program includes inaugural ceremony, environment fair, environment medal presentation, painting competition for children and youth, environmental slogan competition, seminar and discussion meeting.

In 2023, a research project titled "Projections of Sea Level Rise and Assessments of its Sectoral (Agriculture, Water and Infrastructure) Impact" was conducted by the Department of Environment with funding from the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund to assess the risk of sea level rise. " In the last 30 years, the rate of sea level rise in the coastal areas of Bangladesh has been shown to be between 3.8 and 5.8 mm per year. Based on the survey data, about 12.34 per cent to 17.95 per cent of Bangladesh's coastal areas will be underwater by the end of the century. The study also showed that, due to the increase in sea level will be the only reason for the decrease in rice production of Bangladesh by 5.8 to 9.1 percent.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department report 2023, Ishwardi upazila of Pabna district had the highest temperature of 43 degrees celsius in the country. The average temperature for the month of July in Bangladesh was 1.7 ° C higher than normal temperature while the average temperature across the country was 38.4 ° C on July 31. Due to the influence of global weather, the temperature in Bangladesh can have a major impact. According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Bangladesh will see average rainfall or erratic rainfall patterns, and the warm weather could lead to drought.

The problem of air pollution and noise pollution in Dhaka city is increasing day by day. In January 2023, 20 days were marked for having extremely unhealthy air conditions. According to data from the Centre for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS), Dhaka's air pollution rose by about 27% in January 2023 compared to the previous year. The average AQI of Dhaka in January 2022 was 222, which increased to 281 in 2023. In February 2023, the average AQI score was 226; in February 2022, it was 214. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, has fallen behind in international and national environmental requirements, ranking seventh among the world's unlivable cities. The air quality for 2023 has often been labeled as the most polluted globally, posing a significant threat to public health. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that air pollution has led to an increase in deaths from heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, acute respiratory infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease this year. The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) has urged the government to comply with the High Court's order and install an alarm system to protect the citizens of Dhaka from air pollution in light of the situation.



In January 2023, the two city corporations of Dhaka tested the noise level through CAPS at 82 roads. According to the study, the intensity of noise in Dhaka's two city corporations is almost double of the permissible level. The average noise level in Dhaka South City Corporation was measured at 76.80 decibels.

The rise in sea level in the coastal districts of Bangladesh is causing soil salinity and degradation of arable land. Women, whose livelihood depends on agriculture, are affected the most. In response, some organizations have taken steps to provide women with the skills and support they need to develop crop varieties that are resistant to climate change and involved in sustainable agriculture. It enhances food security and helps women adapt to the changing landscape. To install and maintain solar panels in off-grid areas of the country, some companies train women and also employ them under certain conditions. Thus, in 2023, the relationship between renewable energy and women's economic empowerment has been strengthened.