

## Editor's Desk

The theme of the August 2023 issue of *Thinking Aloud* is "Energy landscape of Bangladesh". The first page article, "The future of renewable energy in Bangladesh" analyses the prospects of renewable energy sector in Bangladesh by examining the relevant policies, challenges and proposes the way forward. Set against the backdrop that the energy sector in Bangladesh is heavily dependent on fossil fuels, the article remarks that the progress towards switching to renewable energy in Bangladesh has remained very slow and uncertain. In order to transform Bangladesh's energy systems and speed up the shift to renewable energy in the next decade or so, a few critical actions the country need to be prioritized. The second, third, and fourth pages of this issue present three more articles. The second article titled "Solar Energy Landscape in Bangladesh: Prospects and Problems" argues that Bangladesh's solar industry shows progress, but it falls short of meeting the necessary pace to fulfill global and national renewable energy commitments. The article further suggests that in line with expert recommendations, developing a comprehensive funding roadmap, offering industry incentives, and implementing smart grid solutions can help to bridge the gap and move closer to achieving our renewable energy objectives. The third article titled, "Potential risks and vulnerabilities associated with heavy reliance on LNG import and strategies to reduce them" discusses the implications of rising LNG import in the context of Bangladesh's energy security. The article explains the potential risks and vulnerabilities associated with heavy reliance on LNG imports. The fourth article titled "Renewable Energy in Budget FY 23-24: Understanding the Shortfall" remarks that it is imperative that Bangladesh strongly pursues the renewable energy pathway. The article concludes that, to achieve the government's stated goals of adopting renewable energy and upholding its climate commitments, there is no alternative to prudent management of budgetary tools and fiscal space. The fourth page showcases the events of July 2023 and shares the call for the 19th round of the South Asian Economics Students' Meet (SAESM).

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## The future of renewable energy in Bangladesh

Selim Raihan

Renewable energy is energy produced from natural resources that regenerate themselves without depleting the planet's resources in less than a human lifetime. These resources, which include biomass, tides, waves, sunshine, wind, rain, and thermal energy stored in the earth's crust, have the advantage of being accessible in some capacity almost everywhere. They are practically inexhaustible. Even more crucially, they don't harm the climate or the ecosystem much. In contrast, fossil fuels like oil, coal, and natural gas are only found in finite amounts. They eventually run out as we continue to extract them. Even if they are created by natural processes, their replenishment does not happen as quickly as our consumption of them. More emissions are produced by burning fossil fuels than by producing electricity from renewable sources. The key to solving the climate catastrophe is switching from fossil fuels, which now produce the majority of emissions, to renewable energy. For both people and the planet as a whole, there are other benefits of renewable energy. Renewable energy is eventually becoming more affordable, it is equitable and secure, and it has the potential to create jobs.

The energy sector in Bangladesh is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Both domestic and imported fossil fuels play a significant role in Bangladesh's energy production. In 2022, more than 98% of all energy production originated from natural gas, oil, diesel, and coal. Less than 2% of the energy mix is renewables. Over the years, the reliance on fossil fuels intensified. However, the Renewable Energy Policy of Bangladesh, which was introduced in 2008, aimed at harnessing the potential of renewable energy resources and technologies in the country. The policy set a target of meeting 5% of total power demand by 2015 and 10% by 2020 from renewable sources. These targets were never met. There are, however, conflicting targets in governments' various policies and plans. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan was introduced by Bangladesh in 2021 (MCP) to enhance the nation's resiliency to climate change. This plan aims to reach 30% renewable energy by 2030 and at least 40% by 2041. In contrast, under the draft Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP), Bangladesh has set a clean energy (renewable and nuclear) target of 40% by 2041. Also, the government's annual budget documents set different targets. The real picture is that the progress towards switching to renewable energy in Bangladesh has remained very slow and uncertain.

There are several challenges to the expansion of renewable energy in Bangladesh. There is no denying that the viability of renewable energy in Bangladesh will depend on the market price or value of renewable energy, the costs of renewable energy in comparison to other energy resources, and policies to promote renewable energy and environmental goals that increase the costs of using fossil fuels and/or subsidize the costs of renewable energy. In these contexts, wider adoption of renewable energy is hindered by the pressures from the fossil fuel lobbies, ineffective governmental regulations, outdated infrastructure, expensive initial installation costs, a lack of proper battery storage systems, a lack of knowledge and awareness, and a lack of policies and subsidies.

The aforementioned discussion suggests that to transform Bangladesh's energy systems and speed up the shift to renewable energy in the next decade or so, a few critical

actions the country needs to prioritize. In line with the statements of the UN Secretary-General António Guterre, the following actions can be suggested.

First, there is a need to ensure easy access to renewable energy. Renewable energy technology needs to be accessible to everyone and not just the wealthy. Energy from renewable sources, such as solar and wind, can be stored and released when people, communities, and businesses need power thanks to crucial technology like battery storage systems. Due to their special ability to quickly absorb, hold, and re-inject electricity, they aid in increasing the flexibility of the energy system. Additionally, battery storage technologies can offer dependable and less expensive electricity in off-grid settlements and isolated networks when combined with renewable sources. Bangladesh also needs to explore the opportunities for importing renewable energy from neighbouring countries like India, Bhutan and Nepal.

Second, a steady supply of raw materials and component supplies for renewable energy is crucial to have broader access to all the essential parts and resources. In addition, the management of renewable energy wastes is important to create supply chains that safeguard ecosystems.

Third, there is a need to create a level playing field for technologies utilizing renewable energy. Domestic policy frameworks need to be quickly changed to streamline and accelerate renewable energy projects and spur private sector investments. Policies and procedures must be put in place to lower market risk, enable investments, and provide incentives – including by streamlining the planning, permitting, and regulatory processes and avoiding bottlenecks and red tape. The adoption of solar and wind energy technologies can be accelerated by the availability of modern energy transmission infrastructure, clear and strong policies, transparent processes, and public support.

Fourth, the country needs to switch energy subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy. One of the largest financial obstacles preventing the country's transition to renewable energy is fossil fuel subsidies. The cost of subsidizing the fossil fuel industry alone is enormous and includes direct subsidies, tax benefits, and costs for health and the environment that weren't factored into the pricing of fossil fuels. Subsidies for fossil fuels are unfair and inefficient. Subsidizing renewable energy instead of fossil fuels reduces emissions and has the potential of fostering sustainable economic growth, job creation, improved public health, and greater equality, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Fifth, it is critically important to make considerable investments in renewable energy. There is a need for commitment and accountability, especially from the financial systems, including banks and other public and private financial institutions, which must direct their lending portfolios toward hastening the transition to renewable energy.

Finally, resources must be shifted between competing industrial sectors and political constituencies as part of a sustainable energy transition. As stakeholders in this process have varying degrees of political and economic power, understanding how political and economic factors influence the transition to renewable energy is crucial for formulating effective policies and facilitating the shift to sustainable energy systems.

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## Solar energy landscape in Bangladesh: prospects and problems

*Israt Hossain*

The remarkable solar energy potential in Bangladesh positions it as a highly promising and valuable renewable resource within the country. According to the National Solar Energy Roadmap (draft), with an average daily solar radiation of about 4.5 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>, there lies a significant opportunity to capitalize on this abundant energy through both thermal and photovoltaic methods. Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems is the mostly contributing power generating source among all renewable sources in Bangladesh. As per the IEPMP (Draft), the renewable energy (RE) sector generates only an approximate total of 777 MW of electricity of which nearly 70% is derived from solar power till 2021. Among all distinct categories of solar energy systems, solar parks, solar home system (SHS), rooftop solar power and solar irrigation system dominate the solar industry in Bangladesh.

Solar parks or the large solar photovoltaic plants contribute the most in generating power in the solar industry of the country. As of now there are ten completed and running solar parks along with eight implementation ongoing and twenty four under-planning solar park project. Solar parks have the largest capacity of 2470.66 MWp in comparison with other solar systems. As solar plant need large plots of land, the opportunity cost of it is much larger for Bangladesh being a densely populated country where each unit of land has alternative use of food cultivation or housing. Experts recommend privatizing unused lands and transferring abandoned and closed plants to private enterprises to enhance operational efficiency and overcome land scarcity through more effective land utilization.

Following solar power plants, rooftop solar systems emerge as one of the most notable utilizations of solar energy, presenting a unique opportunity for industrial consumers to utilize their idle roof spaces for power generation. The government of Bangladesh introduced net metering guidelines on July 28, 2018 to promote rooftop solar power. In this system, consumers can connect their rooftop solar systems to the distribution grid, enabling surplus electricity to be supplied back to the country's grid line. The government has set target of adding 300 MW of rooftop solar power capacity by 2025 through rooftop power generation on all high-rise buildings with financial support from IDCOL. Presently, 84.6 MWp has been achieved through rooftop net-metering and an additional 69.934 MWp capacity through rooftop systems without net metering, as reported by SREDA.

Unlocking the full potential of rooftop solar facilities in the country requires addressing several crucial challenges such as lack of domestically manufactured high-quality solar inverters, high import duties on inverters, inadequate testing facilities and the prevalence of sub-standard solar accessories in the market. Additionally, the green refinance scheme, initiated by the Bangladesh Bank back in 2009, has undergone numerous revisions over time which is affecting its widespread adoption due to unaware stakeholders.

Another substantial renewable energy initiative mentioned by SREDA is solar irrigation. A key factor contributing to the success of this irrigation process

is the uninterrupted supply of electricity ensuring continuous water availability. The World Bank supported the government for the installation of 11,500 SIPs by 2018. Recognizing the potential and acceptance of SIPs among farmers, the World Bank revised the target of SIP installation to 50,000 SIPs by 2025, a study in 2021 reported. Among various government implementing agencies, IDCOL serves as the channel for grant and credit funding to non-government organizations and private financiers responsible for setting up SIPs. The principal goal of the IDCOL program is to deploy solar PV-based irrigation systems in regions with the potential to cultivate three types of crops year-round with a target to install 10,000 solar irrigation pumps by 2030. As of now, there are 1,523 solar irrigation pumps already operational, collectively boasting a capacity of 42.08 MWp.

Regarding small renewable energy projects, Bangladesh Solar Home Systems (SHS) Program is claimed to be one of the biggest projects to bring electricity to remote areas though it did not succeed as expected. Many of these systems have encountered issues primarily attributed to the inferior quality of the batteries and inverters used. At present, approximately US\$1,094.93 million has been invested in SHS program to provide electricity services to about 20 million people according to a World Bank report in 2021. Between 2003 and 2014, the SHS Program enjoyed considerable success, owing to a robust implementation model with strong leadership from IDCOL (Infrastructure Development Company Limited). In 2015, a significant challenge emerged for the SHS Program, mainly due to the rapid and unexpected expansion of the national grid contracting the SHS market. Furthermore, another off-grid solar home system project named TR/KABITA distributing free solar systems without proper quality checks, monitoring, or offering any training to the partner organizations involved, impacted the SHS market negatively. The majority of customers did not receive satisfactory after-sales service from the partner organizations associated with IDCOL. Some of these organizations opted to close their local service offices, citing financial challenges arising from consumers defaulting on their instalment payments. This market distortion happened due to running three major initiatives together without proper coordination: the grid expansion, the SHS Program, and the TR/KABITA Program.

Other solar power systems have not seen significant development yet except the mini-grid for the remote regions. As of July 2023, Bangladesh has made significant progress, claiming a total of 28 solar PV-powered off-grid mini-grids with a cumulative capacity of 5.805 MWp.

Summing up, Bangladesh's solar industry shows progress, but it falls short of meeting the necessary pace to fulfill global and national renewable energy commitments. Aligning with expert recommendations, developing a comprehensive funding roadmap, offering industry incentives, and implementing smart grid solutions can help to bridge the gap and move closer to achieving our renewable energy objectives.

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## Potential risks and vulnerabilities associated with heavy reliance on LNG import and strategies to reduce them

*Md. Tuhin Ahmed and Md. Abdul Aahad*

In recent years, the landscape of the energy sector in Bangladesh has witnessed significant changes. The rising demand for natural gas, coupled with the difficulties in gas exploration and production, has resulted in a reliance on the imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Notably, the price of LNG in the global market has been turbulent in the recent years. In 2020, LNG price plummeted to as low as USD 2 per Million British Thermal Units (MMBtu) as a result of the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in October 2021, it soared to an unprecedented all-time high of USD 56 per MMBtu. This fluctuation and increasing volatility of the LNG market has complicated the energy landscape further. Recent foreign exchange shortages have exacerbated the situation. Thus, the rising LNG import has emerged as a potential threat to Bangladesh's energy security.

Due to the rising demand for natural gas and its growing depletion, the government decided to import LNG in 2017. Currently, the total gas demand across various sectors amounts to 3715 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMscfd). According to PetroBangla, by 2024–25, the anticipated gas demand is expected to reach 3,777 MMscfd, followed by a further increase to 3,990 MMscfd in 2025–26. However, the combined gas exploration efforts of five national and international gas exploration companies, namely BAPEX, BGFL, SGFL, Chevron, and Tullow, have resulted in an average gas production of 3008 MMscfd. This average production level highlights a significant gap between the current gas supply and the overall demand in the country. During the fiscal year 2021–22, the average gas production reached 2846 MMscfd, indicating a slight increase in the last two years compared to the current production of 3008 MMscfd. However, it remains evident that the current natural gas production falls short of meeting the existing demand.

Bangladesh first started importing LNG in 2018–19. Since then, imported LNG has played an essential role in meeting the country's gas demand. In 2022, the country imported a substantial quantity of LNG (5.06 million metric tons) from Qatar Gas, Oman Trading, and the Spot market at a cost of USD 4,555 million. The volume of imports has doubled from 2.53 million metric tons in 2018–2019 to 5.06 million metric tons in 2021–22. In addition, to avoid market price volatility and buy LNG at a lower cost, Bangladesh has entered into two long-term contracts with Qatar's Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited and OQ Trading Limited to secure LNG imports for 15 and 10 years, respectively.

However, there are potential risks and vulnerabilities associated with heavy reliance on LNG imports. First, the high LNG price volatility is adversely impacting consumers, utilities, and firms globally, particularly in the emerging markets. Due to foreign exchange reserve shortages, Bangladesh has already experienced and continues to experience power cuts, lower industrial production and issues related to the food supply. The high LNG

price may pressure foreign exchange reserves further.

Second, the growing reliance on LNG imports is jeopardizing the financial sustainability of the country's power system. According to Bangladesh Power Development Board, the overall power generation capacity increased to 22,482MW in FY2021-22, with overall utilisation remaining low at 66%. As a result, the BPDB's operating loss in FY2021-22 increased several times. Due to low operating revenue, a large amount of government subsidy was required to avoid a net loss. With BPDB's financial sustainability under growing pressure, it looks likely that the tariff on imported coal, oil and LNG will continue to grow, which in turn, will put a burden on households and firms.

Third, the increasing use of LNG is accelerating climate change. Although LNG is a cleaner fuel among other fossil fuels like coal and oil, it is mostly methane which is a powerful greenhouse gas (GHG) that creates 86 times more heat in the atmosphere than the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> over 20 years. As a country of extremely vulnerable to climate shocks, Bangladesh's heavy reliance on LNG may intensify its vulnerability to natural disasters.

Fourth, it has severe implications for health and productivity at work. Due to fossil fuel and LNG expansion, heat stress may increase. According to the ILO, heat stress can exacerbate respiratory problems and mental health issues. These may have a negative impact on productivity at work.

Given the risks and vulnerabilities of heavy reliance on LNG imports, the government of Bangladesh should undertake appropriate changes in its policy areas. First, the GoB should prioritize renewable energy as an alternative to fossil fuels. Even though renewable energy sources have the potential to deliver the least expensive energy, there is no considerable budgetary allocation in this regard.

Second, LNG import entails a volatile nature and conditionality on world events which will eventually make us vulnerable. It is, therefore, crucial to prioritise domestic gas exploration and production before focusing on importing LNG to meet demand.

Third, solar share in power generation has been increasing over the last few years. The government should, therefore, provide enough incentives to encourage solar-based power generation. Nonetheless, the importers are facing import duties ranging from 15.25% to 58.6% on several accessories such as fibre-reinforced polymer walkways, imported inverters, mounting structures, and direct current cables. It raises project costs and works as a negative incentive.

Fourth, solar irrigation is a less popular but more effective mode of utilising solar energy and reducing dependence on diesel consumption in the country. In this connection, the GoB can make a separate budgetary allocation for conversion from diesel-run irrigation systems to solar-based irrigation to ensure an uninterrupted and carbon-free energy supply.

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## Renewable energy in budget FY 23-24: understanding the shortfall

*Omar Raad Chowdhury and Mohammad Asaduzzaman*

Bangladesh aims to generate 40% electricity from renewable sources by 2041. However, the previous target of producing 10% of total electricity from RE by 2020 is far from being realised. Currently, only 3.7% of the total energy mix consists of renewable sources. To meet the 2041 renewable energy (RE) target, renewable capacity needs to be 16 Gigawatt (GW) in 2031 and 40 GW in 2041.

The Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) has provided estimates for the proportion of RE in the power sector under three different scenarios in the "Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan - Decade 2030: Power Sector Analysis". The scenarios are Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan-Maximal (MCPM), Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan-Realistic Scenario (MCPM-R), and Nationally Determined Contributions Scenario (NDC Scenario). According to the estimates, the highest proportion of RE in power generation is expected in MCPM (19%), followed by MCPM-R (13%) and NDC (6%).

For each of these scenarios, it is necessary to understand the investment need. The "Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan—Decade 2030: Power Sector Analysis" presents an estimate respectively for 2025 and 2030 for all three scenarios in this regard. The estimate posits that under the scenario of MCPM, the investment required by 2025 is BDT 26,675 crore, and by 2030 is BDT 69,664 crore. Under the scenario of MCPM-R, the investment required by 2025 is BDT 21,193 crore, and by 2030 is BDT 44,002 crore. Under the scenario of NDC, the investment required by 2025 is BDT 8,819 crore, and by 2030 is BDT 18,720 crore.

In the recently announced national budget for FY2023-24, BDT 34,819 crore was allocated to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources (MoPEMR)—which is 27% higher than the revised budget for FY 2022-23. Among the BDT 33,825 crore allocation for the Power Division (PD), BDT 33,775 crore is allotted as the development budget. For the Energy and Mineral Resources Division (EMRD), only BDT 994 crore was allotted—which is only 3% of the total allocation for the energy and power sector. Furthermore, compared to the budget of the last financial year, the allocation for EMRD has decreased significantly by 48%.

Reportedly, the national budget FY 2023-24 does not offer any notable special incentives for clean and RE. Currently, 15.25% to 58.6% of import duty is applicable to technologies like rooftop solar, fibre-reinforced polymer walkways, imported inverters, mounting structures, and direct current cables. The budget FY 2023-24, however, has exempted value-added tax (VAT) on up to 60 AMP solar battery production for partner organisations of IDCOL.

A quick look at the budgetary allocation thus reveals the incongruency between stated RE targets in the national plans and the policies undertaken. While the investment needed for accelerating RE adoption will require extensive participation from the private sector, the role of the public sector cannot be neglected. According

to the International Energy Agency (IEA), globally, government expenditure on clean energy has risen by \$500 billion since the start of the Ukraine crisis—understandably so, in the face of the shocks in the global energy supply. Almost half of these new investments are concentrated in solar PV. However, this trend is led by developed countries. Yet, as a developing country, Bangladesh needs to revamp its commitment to RE. A major strategy in this regard should be an increased level of public investment in clean and RE—for which there is no alternative to shifting the budgetary consideration. Government spending can also be a significant factor in mobilising private investment in the RE sector.

There are, however, some concerns regarding public investment in RE. The dominating view is that policymakers should refrain from picking market winners by investing in certain firms and technologies, as such practice has the potential to distort the market structure. Another crucial concern is that government subsidy for RE can encourage rent-seeking behaviour among certain stakeholders.

Nevertheless, there are some strong arguments for public investment. Firstly, the private sector may fail to consider investment in RE as profitable, given the abundance of knowledge on conventional fossil-fuel-based technologies and market structure. Public investment, on the other hand, can overcome this barrier. Moreover, the government has much greater scope in bearing the associated risks and the high initial cost of capital, with a view to generating greater economic and social returns in the long term. It goes without saying though, that the government needs to follow a system with defined rules so that no certain groups with special favours emerge as the winners.

The need for subsidising RE and technology becomes apparent in a similar context of social interest and inherent market dynamics. Economist Dani Rodrik, Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, in his paper on green industrial policy argues that subsidies on fossil fuel and failure to implement appropriate taxes for managing climate risks mean that for the private sector, return to green technologies is well below the societal returns. To make the best out of such subsidy programs, within a broader framework of an industrial policy, Dr Rodrik argues that the government should pursue strategic collaboration with the private sector so that bottlenecks can be identified and done away with. He also maintains that through accountability and effective discipline, rent-seeking behaviour can be managed.

As far as economic and social benefits go, it is imperative that Bangladesh strongly pursues the RE pathway. To achieve the government's stated goals of adopting RE and upholding its climate commitments, there is no alternative to prudent management of budgetary tools and fiscal space.

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### Dr Selim Raihan presented at the IHD-ILO Conference at Delhi



Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director at SANEM, presented the paper "What drives firms to innovate? Empirical evidence from firm-level cross-country panel data", at the international conference on "New Technologies and the Future of Work in the Global South" on 17 July 2023. The conference, held from 17 to 19 July 2023, was organized by The Institute for Human Development (IHD), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, Wits University, South Africa in collaboration with NITI Aayog, Government of India. The co-authors of the paper are Mahtab Uddin, PhD Scholar, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, UK, and Farhan Khan, MS. Student, North South University, Bangladesh. The session was chaired by Bino Paul, Professor and Pro Vice Chancellor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. As the discussant was present Radhicka Kapoor, Visiting Professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi.

### SANEM's Seminar on "Youth's Perception on Renewable Energy"



South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), organized a seminar on "Youth's Perception on Renewable Energy", in collaboration with Economics Study Center, University of Dhaka. The seminar was held on 24 July 2023, at Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium, University of Dhaka. The seminar was moderated by Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM. Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director at SANEM, and Ms Farha Tasneem Zinia, President, Economics Study Center, University of Dhaka delivered the welcome addresses. The keynote presentation was delivered by Ms Israt Hossain, Senior Research Associate, SANEM. As panellists were present Mr Md Shahriar Ahmed Chowdhury, Director, Centre for Renewable Energy Research and Assistant Professor, UIU; Dr Sakib Bin Amin, Associate Professor, North South University; Ms Aziza Sultana Mukti, Head of Operations, SOLshare; Mr Md Abul Kalam Azad, Manager-FGGII, ActionAid Bangladesh, and Mr Hasin Ishraq, Student, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.

### Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha delivered the keynote presentation at DCCI seminar



Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM, delivered the keynote presentation at the seminar on "Industry-Academia Linkage: Employability of Graduates in the changing global context", held on 8 July 2023. The seminar was organized by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The seminar was chaired by Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar, President of DCCI. Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni, MP was present on the occasion as the chief guest while Executive Chairman (Secretary), National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) Nasreen Afroz was present as guest of honour. As panellists were present, Mohammad Abdul Momen, Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA); Syed Nasim Manzur, Managing Director, Apex Footwear Limited; Professor Dr Md. Sazzad Hossain, Member, University Grants Commission (Commission); Imran Khan, Former CFO of Snapchat Inc.; Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director, ILO, and Shafquat Haider, Member, Governing Board, NSDA.

### Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha spoke at the panel discussion organized by the Shantibari



Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM, was a panellist at the panel discussion on "Bangladesh as a Middle-Income Country: How Can Women have a better life?", held on 28 July 2023. The panel discussion was held in the event, "Celebration of Life", organized by the Shantibari, at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. As other panellists were present, Barrister Miti Sanjana and Dr Snigdha Rezwana. The panel discussion was moderated by Mr Anirban Bhowmik, Director Central, East and Southern Africa, SwissContact.




## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### 19th South Asian Economics Students' Meet (SAESM)

**Building Resilient Economies:  
South Asia's Green Transition to a Sustainable Tomorrow**

**January 22 - 27, 2024 | Colombo, Sri Lanka**

On behalf of the Department of Economics, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, SAESM Bangladesh cordially announces this call for participation of students from Bangladesh in the 19th round of the South Asian Economics Students' Meet (SAESM). The Meet will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from January 22nd to 27th, 2024. The theme of this year's meet is "Building Resilient Economies: South Asia's Green Transition to a Sustainable Tomorrow" which aims to foster intellectual discussions among young individuals to contribute to a more sustainable and improved South Asia. The details of the call are available on SANEM's website.



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.