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# COVID RESPONSES: THE CASE OF BANGLADESH SMALL AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES CORPORATION (BSCIC)

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**Abstract:** *Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) provided lots of pro-poor services to Bangladesh amid COVID-19 pandemic. Based on such a backdrop, this paper has tried to address the following objectives: i) To assess the impact of COVID-19 on global economy with special reference to Bangladesh; ii) To describe the remedial measures and incentive package undertaken by Bangladesh Government to overcome the COVID pandemic; iii) To have a brief overview of the status of cottage industries with special focus to BSCIC's role; iv) To identify and analyze COVID responses by the BSCIC during COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The findings revealed that devastating loss occurred in the major sectors of the economy in USA, China, and Bangladesh. It was observed that BSCIC and some of its industrial units amid COVID pandemic provided various pro-poor services and pragmatic initiatives to help its clientele, and the Bangladesh society. During the COVID pandemic, the services rendered by BSCIC included producing and distributing of different health hygiene and protective gears i.e., PPEs, surgical face masks, sanitizers and disinfectants and dry food items; allowing delay for the borrowers to repay loans for 3 months and facilitating easy loans for the salt growers under BSCIC at Cox's Bazar; providing an incentive package for the cottage, small, micro, and medium industries in Bangladesh. Such services and incentive will help them to recover the economic loss incurred by those SME and cottage industries gradually.*

**Key words:** *impact of COVID-19 pandemic, cottage industries, BSCIC, pro-poor services during COVID, Bangladesh*

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## 1. Introduction

Cottage industries play a *sine-qua-non* role in socio-economic development of a country all over the world. It has enormous prerogatives especially for the countries where industrialization is at the nascent stage or has a weak base. Sometimes it provides raw materials to some industries. It plays a prominent role in overall economic development

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of the country and contributes significantly to the gross domestic products and export earnings apart from providing employment opportunities to millions of people across the country, reducing income equality, ensuring balanced and regional development, and creating strong entrepreneurial base using local expertise, wisdom, and skills.

Bangladesh has a strong base of small and cottage industry. During the COVID pandemic, when the whole economy experienced sudden shock and incurred huge loss, lots of poor workers who were involved with the cottage industries in Bangladesh were jobless and suffered miserably. Following the government lockdown and after overcoming that initial shock, some of the cottage industries under Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) provided lots of pro-poor services to the Bangladesh society and took measures to overcome the stalemate in diverse ways and means. Against such a backdrop, this paper aims at delving into the following objectives: i) To assess the impact of COVID-19 on global economy with special references to Bangladesh; ii) To look into the remedial measures undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh to overcome the COVID pandemic; iii) To have a brief overview of the status of cottage industries with special focus to BSCIC's role; iv) To identify and analyze the pro-poor services rendered by the BSCIC during COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.

## **2. Methods and Resources of the Paper**

This paper is mainly based on content analysis method. For doing that lots of secondary materials were consulted from BARD library and document search on the internet. For doing content analysis, many secondary materials were consulted, which included books, research papers, journal articles, reports, master and doctoral thesis, brochures, write ups in daily newspapers, conference, and seminar papers etc. Through a heuristic search concepts, definition and governing issues of cottage study and BSCIS' role and its pro-poor services to the society of Bangladesh were looked into and analyzed the findings in congruence with the objectives of this paper. The materials on the impacts of COVID is fully based on online data. The data relating with the impacts of COVID-19 were collected up to August 2020.

## **3. Spillover Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic: Global Scenario with Especial Reference to Bangladesh**

After the sudden onslaught and outburst of COVID-19 in Wuhan Province, China on 31 December 2019 (WHO, 2020a). which gradually spread over a total of 214 countries and territories (as of Nov 02, 2020). All over the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all sectors of society and economy in the affected countries of the world. In fact, the whole world has been worst hit by COVID. The affected industries are: iron, steel, coffee, banking, insurance, financial markets, coal, power, gas, oil, aeronautics, cements, food, agriculture, aquariums, marine, atomic, automobile, cottage, leather, chemicals, education, research, consultation, gold, silver, real estates, meat, water, air, toys, hardware of computer, software of computer, networking of computer, households, glossaries, fashions, wood, cosmetics, second hand items, sports, religions,

politics, lime, logistics and medical, transport in the world. In fact, some industries such as leather, garments and motor vehicles are the losers, whereas industries dealing with pharmaceuticals, paper, chemical and tobacco and food are the winners (Cantore *et al.*, 2020). In this section global impact of COVID on USA and China was discussed in brief, which was followed by impact of COVID-19 in Bangladesh. Incentive packages declared by the government of Bangladesh was also described succinctly.

### **3.1. Global Scenario: Few Statistics from USA and China**

#### **3.1.a. COVID's Impact on USA Economy**

On May 8, 2020, the Bureau of Labour Statistics reported that 20 million Americans lost their jobs in April 2020, pushing the total number of unemployed Americans to 23 million, out of a total civilian labour force of 158 million. The increase pushed the national unemployment rate to 14.7% (with some caveats), the highest since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Jackson *et al.*, 2020). Preliminary data also indicated that U.S. economic growth rate dropped by 5.0% at an annual rate in the first quarter of 2020. Similarly, U.S. economic growth is projected to contract in 2020 by 7.3% but rebound by 4.1% in 2021. Industrial production across the Eurozone fell by 17% in April, raising the annual decline to 28%, surpassing the contraction experienced during the global financial crisis. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on June 10, 2020, released an updated forecast that projects global economic growth would decline by 6.0% to 7.6% in 2020, depending on whether there is a second wave of infections (Jackson *et al.*, 2020).

#### **3.1.b. COVID's Impact on Chinese Economy**

The global pandemic is expected to reduce Chinese GDP by 3.7%. In the first quarter of 2020 China's Economy is expected to slow to 4.5%, which is the slowest pace after the financial crisis of 2009. China's exports in tourist-related activities have declined by 29%, while imports of tourist-related activities has declined by 37%, where as China's car production will be cut down by 15% (Maliszewska *et al.* 2020). The coronavirus outbreak also affected the pharmaceutical supply chain. Drug makers around the world relied heavily on ingredients made in Chinese factories. About 60% of the world's pharmaceutical products were made in China before the coronavirus outbreak, and the coronavirus outbreak caused severe supply problems as China shutdown majority of its factories including factories that produce drugs. Huge withdrawal of Japanese investment from China has already taken place (Jackson *et al.*, 2020)

#### **Global Impact: Scenarios of COVID in Few Sectors**

Due to coronavirus, there will be huge spillover negative implication in many sectors of the world economy some of which are portrayed here. Due to COVID, real per capita income in 2020 is projected to decline by 8% and 9.5%, respectively, depending on a one- or two-wave contagion, with substantial declines in all economies. Even with an economic recovery in 2021, real per capita income is projected to rise to only that of 2013 (Jackson *et al.*, 2020). Due to COVID-19, global GDP is expected to decline by 2.1%, while developing countries' GDP is expected to decline by 2.5% and high-

income countries by 1.9%. (Maliszewska *et al.*, 2020). According to IMF, it was found that due to corona virus, global growth would shrink by 4.2% (Cantore *et al.*, 2020). The second shock (cumulative with the supply shock) raises the international trade costs of imports and exports by 25%. Global trade could also fall by 13% to 32%, depending on the depth and extent of the global economic downturn (Cantore *et al.*, & Maliszewska *et al.*, 2020).

Since then, the emergency has evolved into a global public health and economic crisis that has affected the \$90 trillion global economy beyond anything experienced in nearly a century (Jackson *et al.*, 2020). The global trade and investment volumes are expected to drop between 32% and 9% in 2020 (Jackson *et al.*, 2020). Assuming a drop in global GDP based on the IMF estimate, the expected increase in the share of people living in extreme poverty will range from 0.8% to 1.5 percentage points. This is equivalent to an increase of between 50 million to 70 million people compared with the original estimates for 2020 (Jackson *et al.*, 2020). The global tourism industry will be worst hit by corona virus. Due to spillover impact to the travel industry and travel restrictions cost, the tourism industry alone will incur a loss of over \$200 billion globally (IATA); sports industry will be losers by billions of dollars. The global film industry incurred a \$5 billion loss during the coronavirus outbreak.; global stock markets lost \$6 trillion in value over six days from 23 to 28 February 2020; oil price reached to lowest ever price. The spillover impact to the education sector were also huge. The coronavirus disrupted the \$600 billion higher education industry globally. The biggest GDP losses under the global pandemic scenario are expected in East Asia and Pacific (EAP) countries due to their relatively deep integration through trade and direct impact on tourism, e.g., Cambodia (3.2%), Singapore (2.1%), Hong Kong SAR, China (2.3%), Thailand (3 %), Vietnam (2.7 %), and Malaysia (2.1%) (World Bank, 2020a).

### ***3.2. Impact of COVID-19 in Diverse Sectors of Bangladesh Society and Economy***

#### **Economic Downturn**

According to ADB, the total economic loss of the whole world will be 5.8 to 8.8 trillion US\$ (UNDP, 2020). World Economic Situation and Prospects, Mid 2020 Report estimates that in the year 2020, 34.3 million and within 2030 a total of 130 million people can be included as hard-core poor (World Bank, 2020c). World economy can be reduced by 5.2% and the South Asian economy can be constrained by 2.7% (UNDP, 2020). ILO estimated that 10.5% of the full-time employee workforce of the whole world has lost their job. In the first month of COVID crisis, the income level of 60% employee engaged in informal sector has been reduced (ILO, 2020).

Due to lock down, the economic loss of Bangladesh in the last quarter will be equal to Tk. 2 lacks 17 thousand 800 crores<sup>1</sup> which is 9% of the last year's GDP (Hamid, 2020). From January to March, a total of 6 lacks 66 thousand 530 wage earners came back to

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<sup>1</sup> Crore is a unit of money which is popularly used in Bangladesh where one crore = 10 million takas in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh and thus the remittance earning has reduced by 22% (Ali, 2020). According to South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), the income level of the poor people can be reduced by 25% and the number of poverty-stricken people will be increased to 40.9% from 20.5% (Ahmed, 2020). Due to lock down and vacation the monthly income level of the 95% people has reduced, and the average income has been reduced by 76%<sup>1</sup>. Power and Participation Research Center (PPRC) estimates that income level of 70 people who belonged to hard core, medium and future poor has reduced, and economic activities have been reduced by 55% in rural society (Rahman, 2020).

### **Loss in Agriculture and Service Sector**

Due to coronavirus, the agriculture sector of Bangladesh faces loss of 200 crore Taka (Tk.)<sup>2</sup> every day (Hamid, 2020). BRAC estimates that in the 45 days lock down the loss in Agriculture sector equals to Tk. 565.36 billion<sup>3</sup>; the dairy and milk producing farm from Jan to march (3 months) incurred loss of taka 4000 Tk.<sup>4</sup>; the service sector is having a loss of Tk. 2000 crore every day (Babu, 2020). The export earning has reduced immensely. 85% of the export earning comes from RMG sector. Due to COVID, 20 workers have been affected (Bhuiyan, 2020).

### **Social impact**

UNICEF says suicide tendency in children has increased immensely. It estimates that due to COVID, in the next six months a total of 12 crores children can become poor and they will face food insecurity. Apart from those 60 crores children are in the danger in South Asia region (UNICEF, 2020). Child abuse and child marriage has alarmingly enhanced. MJF estimates during the Jan- March period, 4249 women and 456 children face family torture. Due to coronavirus, 28000 children may die due to lack of immunization facilities in the country<sup>5</sup>

### ***3.3. Incentive Packages Declared by the Government of Bangladesh***

To manage short, medium, and long-term shock in the economy of Bangladesh, the government has declared a package of Tk. 95,000 crore (Hamid, 2020). Apart from that in business sector, 1 lack 3 thousand 117 thousand Tk. crore assistance was declared (Hasan, 2020).

Rice seeds and fertilizer have been distributed free of cost from the government. To provide working capital to the farmers engaged in agriculture 5,000 crore Tk. fund was mobilized for distribution. Small and medium farmers will be allowed loan at the rate of

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<sup>1</sup> The Daily Inqilab Online, 11 June 2020

<sup>2</sup> For clear understanding of the international readers please note that 1 US\$ = 84.80 Bangladeshi Taka (as on 25 Jan. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> The Bonik Barta Online, 26 June 2020

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem

<sup>5</sup> MJF, 6 May 2020

4% in agriculture, dairy, livestock, fisheries, and poultry sector; to provide subsidy in agriculture 9500 crore Tk. has been allocated; for purchasing equipment for mechanized agriculture, 70% subsidy has been given to the farmers (Hasan, 2020).

Up to 29 May, 91 thousand 817 metric ton rice has been allocated and 62000 193MT rice has been distributed. A total of 1 crore 36 87 thousand 244 families and 6 crore 11 lack 48 thousand 771 people/members were benefitted through this food distribution. Cash distribution through Gratuitous Relief (GR) was Tk. 86 crore 43 lac 72 000 and 264 Tk. and beneficiaries were 3 crore 75 lack 10 thousand 858. Allocation for Baby food was Tk. 23 crore, 94 lac and beneficiaries were 12 lack 49 thousand 450 people (Hasan, 2020). For 46,000 village police in 4,569 Union Parishads (the Lowest Unit of local Government in Bangladesh) a total of Tk. 6 crore giving Tk. 1300 each were distributed from the LG ministry (Hasan, 2020).

50 families were given cash support having Tk. 2,500 for each poor family. (Kallol, 2020). The allocation of Social Safety Net was enhanced by 16.75%. old people will be included at the old age scheme<sup>1</sup> Three lacks widows and destitute women will be given extra allowances.<sup>2</sup> 55 thousand disabled people will be added more in those categories.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4. BSCIC and Cottage Industries: Profiles of Actions in Bangladesh**

The history of cottage industry is very old in Bangladesh. During the Pre-Mughal period, the world famous “muslin” was produced in Bengal which earned huge name and fame from all over the world, for its extraordinary quality. In pre-British Bengal, the cotton industry was organized under the pure handcraft or the domestic system of production. During the Mughal rule in Bengal, Cottage industry used to be patronized by the government. Initially, the European merchants and companies, from Britain and Holland, and the East India Company financed the weavers and artisans, and other handicraft makers for producing goods of export quality. Later, East India Company adopted repressive and negative role for weavers, artisans and other craftsmen engaged in cottage industries. As a result, the export of textile and handloom products reduced significantly, and base of such industry was further weakened. Again, after the partition of 1947 caused further damages to the cottage industry in Bangladesh, as many Hindu artisans and craftsmen left the country. Again, after liberation of Bangladesh, many Hindu artisans and skilled workers left the country, which also weaken further the base of cottage industries in Bangladesh.

Cottage industry refers to the traditional artisanship of rural people of Bangladesh, who produce various household items with locally available raw materials and artistic skills inherited through ages. For improving their livelihood, they make those artistic products manually depicting the design and motif of the nature of Bangladesh and its people, birds and animals, foliage, plants and trees, rivers, streams, and sky (Tasneem

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<sup>1</sup> The Daily Bangladesh Online, 19 June 2020

<sup>2</sup> The Daily Samakal Online, 11 June 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

and Biswas, 2014). Cottage industry is called a synonym of handicrafts, artistic work in wood and metal, amateur artworks, and rural artistry. At present the cottage industry has expanded to urban area (ADB, 2002). According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2013) there are 7.81 million economic entities in Bangladesh. About 88% of these economic entities are cottage enterprises, while 11% are SMEs. But, about 99% of Bangladeshi formal business enterprises are SMEs (ADB Institute, 2016). They constitute about 75% of non-agricultural employment and contribute about 25% to the national GDP. This 25% is contributed by only the manufacturing SMEs. SMEs of Bangladesh contributes around 56.34% to the GDP, making it the largest contributor (Abdin, 2017).

According to Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), “Cottage industry is a small-scale industrial unit run by the members of the same family either on full or part time basis. Its maximum number of workers should be limited within 20; it uses indigenous technology and is not run by power. If it uses power-run machinery, the maximum number of workers should be ten (BSCIC Brochure, Undated). The National Board of Revenue (NBR) considers the cottage industry as an industrial unit run by a maximum of 50 workers using local skills without adopting power-run mechanical equipment (Banglapedia, quoted in Rahman and Kumar, 2018). The agriculture Census Report of 1983-84 defined the cottage industry as a household level manufacturing unit that produces goods manually. It has been mentioned in the Industrial Policy-2010 that the net asset of a unit of cottage industry without the land and the factory should be less than five hundred thousand taka and its maximum workforce should be ten and they would preferably be family members. (Banglapedia, quoted in Rahman and Kumar, 2018). Cottage Industries have investment up to Tk. 10 lakh except land and building, who engage 15 persons as family labour (GoB, 2020 & 2016; National Industrial Policy 2016 & SME Policy 2019). In fact, cottage industries are better reflected in the definition that cottage industries are basically household industries (HHI) (GoI, 1981, quoted in Azeez, 2003).

In Bangladesh SMEs accounted for more than 99 % of private sector industrial establishments and created job opportunities ranging from 70 % to 80 % of non-agricultural labor force. The share of SMEs’ production value added to the gross domestic product (GDP) ranged between 28 % and 30 % aside from the significant contributions to national exports (ADB, 2014). In Bangladesh, SMEs share about 90 % of private sector enterprises and 70–80 % of non-agricultural workforce. In the years of 2015–16, the contribution of industries (manufacturing) was 20.77, of which large and medium-scale industries contributed 17.19% and small industries 3.58%.<sup>1</sup> Globally cottage industries (CIs) and SSIs helps employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. In many developing and developed countries, Cottage Industries holds the key to industrial development. In India, 95% of industrial units are in small-scale sector with 40% value addition in the manufacturing sector and 6.29% contribution to the Indian Gross Domestic Product (Vasant, 2002 quoted in Aziz 2003; Singh *et al.*, 2008a, 2008b). SMEs are contributing to GDP growth and increasing export earnings of many Asian countries. SMEs generate 60% of GDP in Indonesia and China, 47.6% in the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://print.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2016/11/08/156069/print>.

Republic of Korea, 45% in Singapore, and 43.7% in Japan. In terms of export earnings, about 42.4% of export earnings in India comes from SMEs, 41.5 % in China, 26.3% in Thailand, 20% in Sri Lanka, 18.8% in the Republic of Korea, and 15.7% in Indonesia (Abdin, 2017). In India, states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Maharashtra together accounted for 55.41% of the total exporting units in the country (Dhar and Lydall, 1961). Cottage industries are contributing significantly to GDP and foreign exchange earnings in many countries in Asia and Africa that include Bangladesh, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Morocco, Egypt, and Tanzania etc. Likewise, cottage industries are doing the same in many developed countries as well. Such countries include U.S.A., Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, Canada, United Kingdom, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia, Latin America, Brazil, etc. (Naya, 1985; Sharma, 1994 quoted in Azeez, 2003; Kristiansen & Mbwambo, 2003).

#### ***4.1 Establishment, Structure and Role of BSCIC***

In order to promote the interest of the micro and cottage industries the East Pakistan Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (EPSIC) were established in 1957 by an Act of Parliament under the then leadership of the Minister for Labour, Commerce and Industry, Mr. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the United Front government of East Pakistan (which is now constituted as Bangladesh). During the liberation time the entire industrial sector including the cottage industries of Bangladesh was severely ravaged. Immediately after that, Bangladesh government of started rehabilitating and reorganizing EPSIC with a view to safeguard the interest of the cottage industries as an important sector for enhancing employment opportunities and then EPSIC was renamed as Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC). Thereafter, BSCIC started providing financial and technical support and consultancy services to the artisans, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs for promoting the traditional techniques beside modern technology. BSCIC is a statutory and autonomous organization under the Ministry of Industry. BSCIC provides support services to SMEs & cottage industries in Bangladesh. BSCIC has country-wide institutional network to provide doorstep services for the entrepreneurs. It is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 7 Directors of BSCIC having its Chairman as CEO. It has six Divisions and a Secretariat. Secretary of BSCIC acts as its secretary. The divisions are: i) Finance & Audit; ii) Promotion and Extension; iii) Planning and Development; iv) Project; v) Marketing and Design and vi) Technology. BSCIC has countrywide establishments run by 2410 workforce. It has 4 regional offices; 64 district offices named as Industrial Services Centers; 15 Skills Development Training Centers; 76 Industrial Estates and a Design Centre in the Head Quarters at Dhaka; 27 Development & Training Centers; 3 Cottage Industry Development Program Offices in 3 Hill Tracts Districts of Bangladesh. BSCIC has an office for Salt Production and Development in Cox's Bazaar and there are 9 salt centers of BSCIC under this salt production and development Office. Apart from the above, there are six bee production and breeding centers in six districts. For entrepreneur development, BSCIC has Small & Cottage Industries Training Institute (SCITI) located in Uttara, Dhaka (BSCIC Brochure, Undated).

## ***4.2. Current Functions and Activities of BSCIC***

The major function and activities of BSCIC are to: i) Develop and promote entrepreneurs all over the country; ii) Pre and post investment counseling to entrepreneurs; iii) Registration of SMEs and CIs units; iv) Credit facilitation to entrepreneurs from commercial Banks and financial institutions; v) Prepare & evaluate project profiles for entrepreneurs; vi) Provide technical, advisory & consultancy services to establish new industrial units and quality improvement of Small, Medium and Cottage Industries (SMCI) products; vii) Development and distribution of new designs and prototype; viii) Innovation, collection, adaptation and distribution of technology in the SMCI sector; ix) Recommendation for exemption of duties and taxes; x) Recommendation for import entitlement of raw materials and packaging materials; xi) Provide extension services to honey cultivation, supply of improved variety of bee colonies; xi) Construction and development of industrial estates with necessary infrastructural facilities for SCI; xi) Salt production and extension services; xii) Procurement and supply of Iodine to the salt millers and monitoring of their production; xiii) Training on Entrepreneurship Development, and skills development for artisans and craftsmen; xiv) Research and development; xv) Creation of jobs for Small and Cottage Industries(SCIs); xvi) Help organize buyers-sellers meeting towards marketing and product introduction; xvii) Establishment of Sub-Contracting linkage; xviii) Marketing of SME and SMCI products; xix) Development of linkages between SCIs and large and medium-sized industries; and xx) Help implementation of suitable projects<sup>1</sup>.

## ***4.3 Policy Guidelines and Regulatory Structure of the Cottage Industries & SMEs***

The overall policy directives and guidelines with regards to the governance, management and promotion of SMEs and SCIs in Bangladesh are directly or indirectly entangled with lots of macro level policies and a host of state and non-state intuitions and actors. Some of major policies and institutions that are promoting CIs<sup>2</sup> are: i) Five Year Plan of Bangladesh; ii) Industrial Policy; iii) National Council for Industrial Development (NCID) headed by the PM; iv) Executive Committee of NCID (ECNCID) headed by the Minister of Industries; v) Bangladesh Bank for Financial Services; vi) Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) – directly promote CIs; vii) SME Foundation- provide policy guidelines for SMES in Bangladesh; viii) 36 GOs & 9 NGOs are assigned to carry out activities of the SME Policy 2019; ix) Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries(FBCCI) and other Business Entities; x) The Ministry of Industries (MoI) provides both financial and nonfinancial supports to BSCIC and SME Foundation; xi) BSCIC and SME Foundation are basically responsible for implementation of strategic goals and action plans of SME Policy. To accelerate development of SME sector and carry out Action

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<sup>1</sup> BSCIC Brochure, Undated; The Daily Guardian, 27 June 2018

<sup>2</sup> This part is prepared consulting a few policy documents like SME Policy of 2019, Seven Five Year Plan of Bangladesh, and Industrial Policy 2016.

Plan- Two committees are working i.e i) National SME Development Council and ii) National SME Task Force.

#### 4.4. Contribution of BSCIC Industrial Estates

Since inception BSCIC is playing a pioneering role in developing the industrial base in Bangladesh. Among those industries, BSCIC are mainly promoting small and cottage industries. Table-1 shows that till 2019 BSCIC allotted 10,139 industrial plots of which 4,731 industrial units are currently in production process. Up to June 2019 by investing Tk. 27,689 crore, BSCIC created employment of 5,90,620 persons of which 3,22,608 are male and 2,68,012 are female. The monetary value of the total production made by the BSCIC industries is Tk. 55,262.26 crore of which Tk. 25,528.46 crore came from foreign export. BSCIC has provided Tk. 3,584.85 crore as vat or tax to the government exchequer. Through such contributions, BSCIC helped reducing poverty level, income inequality, regional disparity and ensured utilizing local resources and indigenous skill of the various artisans at the sub-national and grassroots level.

**Table 1:** Investment and Employment in SME and Cottage Industries (2018-2019)

Sl. No.	Issue	Success Achieved/Amount/ Unit
1.	Industrial State	76
2.	Creation of Industrial Plots	10,590
3.	Industrial Plots Allotted	10,139
4.	Industrial Units in Allotted Industrial Plots	5,883
5.	Total Production Units	4,731
6.	Total Export Oriented Units	946
7.	Total Investment in the Industrial Units	27,689 Crore Tk.
8.	Employment (Up to june2019)	5,90,620 Persons (Male: 3,22,608; Female: 2,68,012)
9.	Value of Total Production	55,262.26 Crore Tk.
10.	Value of Total Export	25,528.46 Crore Tk.
11.	Revenue Paid to the Government	3,584.85 Crore Tk.

**Source:** i) GoB (2017), Bangladesh Economic Review 2017, Planning Commission, Dhaka; ii) GoB (2020), Annual Report of BSCIC, BSCIC, Dhaka

The following Table 2 represents that from 2008 up to 2017 cottage and small-scale industries (engaged in manufacturing sector) in Bangladesh are on a steady and growth having little variations in some years. But on the other hand, large and medium industries in on increasing growth rate. The figure shows that since 2014 onward the number of cottage industries are steadily growing, which means that despite lots of challenges government is constantly providing suitable policy measures to promote small and cottage industries in Bangladesh.

**Table 2:** Growth of Small, Cottage, Medium & Large Industries  
(Manufacturing Sector)  
(Figures are in Crore Tk.)

Type of Industry	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Small and Cottage</b>	18525.3 (7.30)	20039.5 (8.17)	21176.0 (5.67)	22569.1 (6.58)	24557.9 (8.81)	26113.1 (6.33)	28342.6 (8.54)	30909.4 (9.06)	33945.8 (9.82)
<b>Medium-Large</b>	74933.6 (6.54)	79631.4 (6.27)	88475.3 (11.11)	97998.3 (10.76)	108436.2 (10.65)	118540.3 (9.32)	131225.4 (10.70)	147313.5 (12.26)	163819.5 (11.20)
<b>Total</b>	93458.9 (6.69)	99670.9 (6.65)	109651.4 (10.01)	120567.4 (9.96)	132994.1 (10.31)	144653.4 (8.77)	159568.0 (10.31)	178222.8 (11.69)	197765.3 (10.97)

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate rate of growth. (Calculated at constant prices of 2005-06)

**Source:** i) Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2017), Planning Commission, Dhaka; GoB (2020), Bangladesh Economic Review (2017), Planning Commission, Dhaka.

## 5. Pro-poor Services Provided by the BSCIC during COVID-19 Pandemic

Many of the industrial units of BSCIC provided various pro-poor benefits and services for the greater the interest of the general mass of Bangladesh during the COVID pandemic. When the whole country was in lockdown at that time such services rendered by the BSCIC industrial units should no doubt deserved profound appreciation. Through providing diverse services these industrial units coped with the COVID situation. The coping strategies and mechanisms adopted by the BSCIC industrial units to help the workers and the people of Bangladesh are described below:

### 5.1. Many Industrial Estates of Rajshahi BSCIC Provided Diverse Services during COVID-19

**Produced sanitizers, medicines, PPEs, and other health armaments:** BSCIC authority informed that 73 industrial estates across the country produced essential medicines and medical supplies, including disinfectant hand sanitizer since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Bangladesh. In line with this effort, Rajshahi BSCIC was the pioneer in producing disinfectant hand sanitizer. In addition to manufacturing of hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment (PPE) and masks, it also helped successful marketing of those produced. The estate produced and marketed around 250,000 bottles of hand sanitizers, 3,000 PPEs and 630,000 surgical face masks, which in fact contributed immensely to meeting up the mounting demands of those everywhere in Bangladesh to help the crisis<sup>1</sup>

**Produced Various Food Items including Medicare Facilities:** Again, the BSCIC authority shared that some 73 industrial units out of 204 were functioning through

<sup>1</sup> The Daily Prothom Alo, 14 June 2020

maintaining social distancing and other health guidelines amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those units, up to June 2020, 12 rice mills produced 450 tons of rice, 3 mills produced 250 tons of pulse and an automatic mill produced 450 tons of flour daily on an average, which played a vital role towards food security besides job creation for many unemployed people. Besides, the estate produced different life saving medicines, essential commodities and medical supplies, including 1,200 liters of hand sanitizer daily. Among the industrial units in the industrial estate, there are 46 food item producing factories. The factories are producing different items, including rice, pulse, flour, *semai* (vermicelli), chanachur, biscuits, cakes, bread, mustard oil, ice cream and pure drinking water. Among the food factories, Nova Asia Agro Industries exported 100% of its food products to the United States and Canada<sup>1</sup>

**BSCIC Industrial Estate Created Employment of many Poor Workers:** Established on 96.46 acres of land with 325 plots accommodating 204 industrial units in 1962, the estate generated employment scopes for around 10,000 people either directly or indirectly. The authority of BSCIC, Rajshahi, said the entrepreneurs supplemented the government efforts of handling the present troubled situation induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The productive activities of those estates generated fresh job opportunities for around 250 people both male and female through maintaining health directives (The Daily Prothom Alo, 14 June 2020).

**Pharmaceutical Supplied Life Saving Drugs and Other Health Protective Gears:** Up to 25 June 2020 Tim Pharmaceutical Ltd. of the BSCIC industrial city produced 12,000 to 15,000 bottles hand sanitizers, which were supplied to different districts, upazilas and unions across the country. Besides, the company has produced 10,000 packets of various life-saving drugs with a market value of around Taka 5 million. Moreover, three more companies namely, Asoka Laboratories, Hawks Pharma and Shahi Laboratories – produced Unani or Ayurvedic medicines by following the hygiene rules (The Daily Prothom Alo, 14 June 2020).

### *5.2. BSCIC Postpones Loan Collection for 3 Months for its Beneficiaries*

BSCIC started Credit Program in 2015-16 fiscal year with Tk. 15 crore. Under the program, Tk. 33 crore was disbursed as loans while its collection rate is 96%. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) decided to postpone loan instalment collection for the next 3 months under its own credit programme. BSCIC has taken the decision to keep the industrial sector dynamic during this time of global pandemic. It also directed to ensure the health safety measures of the workers involved in this small and cottage sectors.<sup>2</sup>

### *5.3. BSCIC Helped Loans to Salt Farmers*

During the COVID situation, BSCIC's Salt Industry Development Office said that a total of 28,791 salt farmers were cultivating salt in 57,722 acres of land during the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem

<sup>2</sup> The UNB News, 12 April 2020.

current salt season. The salt industry, like many other industries in the country, suffered immensely because of the coronavirus pandemic. Even though the production was going well, farmers were not getting a fair price and thus the price of salt reduced by about half of the cost of production. As a result, the domestic agro-based salt industry suffered severe losses. Based on the above reality BSCIC authority requested seven nationalized commercial banks in Cox's Bazar to provide loans to salt farmers at four percent interest with rebate facility under the incentive package announced by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The banks included Sonali Bank Ltd., Bangladesh Krishi Bank Ltd., Agrani Bank Ltd., Janata Bank Ltd., *Karmasangsthan* Bank, Rupali Bank Ltd., and Basic Bank.<sup>1</sup>

#### ***5.4. Provided Financial Incentives to the Cottage, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises***

To combat COVID situation government declared an incentive packages of Tk. 20,000 crore worth to the affected Cottage, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (CMSME) of Bangladesh. But till October 8, the selected nationalized Banks have altogether distributed only 10% loan to the CMSME. To overcome this dismal performance of loan distribution government has decided to simplify the loan distribution guidelines. It was decided in a meeting held at the Ministry of Finance on October 8 that Sonali Bank would send a loan simplification proposal to the Bangladesh Bank within a week. Managing Directors of the Sonali Bank, Agrani Bank, Rupali Bank, Basic Bank, Bangladesh Development Bank, Krishi Bank and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank were present in the meeting. The Concerned Secretary of the Financial Institutions Division provided the directives that after finalization of the loan simplification proposal by the Bangladesh Bank the selected Banks would accelerate the efforts to provide the incentives to the CMSM enterprises. It was decided in that meeting that loan distributed to the Micro and Cottage industries could be performed by the *Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)*<sup>2</sup> and on the other hand the nationalized Bank will provide loan to the SMEs so that benefits of the incentive packages could be properly addressed to help these enterprises.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***5.5 Summary of the Findings: Services Rendered by the BSCIC during COVID Pandemic***

Like other state organizations such as Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Public and Private Hospitals, Law Enforcing Agencies, Bangladesh Military Forces, Central and Local Administration, Pharmaceutical Companies, Nationalized Commercial

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<sup>1</sup> The TBS News, 12 May 2020

<sup>2</sup> Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) is the largest financial institution founded by the Government of Bangladesh in 1990 to finance rural development and provide training to its various clientele. It is the umbrella body for micro credit in Bangladesh. PKSF provides loan to non-governmental organizations that provide micro-credit services at the grassroots. As of 2017, the foundation has 8 million micro borrowers.

<sup>3</sup> The Daily Kaler Kantho, 8 October 2020

Banks, Local Governments etc.- BSCIC has provided excellent services which Bangladesh society required most during the COVID pandemic. During the COVID time 18 ministries and its attached departments tried to respond the critical needs of the society. BSCIC rendered some pro-people services and activities during the COVID crisis. It produced health care facilities (i.e. sanitizers, PPEs, surgical face masks, disinfectants etc.) to serve people's need in such a time when these health hygiene materials became costly and was in high demand. Government sent these sanitizers and disinfectants to the District, Upazila and Union level and distributed those to the needy poor villagers free of cost to combat with corona virus with these protective measures/materials. To meet the demand government took measures to give those to government hospitals free of cost, which is a praiseworthy act of BSCIC. During the time of lockdown all over the country many factory workers who did not have enough means to defray their family expenses, BSCIC provided many poor workers with employment by keeping those industrial units functioning which was extremely beneficial for those poor workers. By providing many essential commodities such as rice, pulse, flour, *semai* (vermicelli), *chanachur*, biscuits, cakes, bread, mustard oil, ice cream and pure drinking water, BSCIC tried to ensure food security to the poor people because government distributed these food items to the extremely needy people of the Bangladesh society. BSCIC helped the micro entrepreneurs by allowing them delay in loan repayment for 3 months and such initiatives helped immensely for the small poor borrowers during the corona period. The salt industries registered under BSCIC salt industries in Cox's Bazar were benefitted a lot because these industries were given extra loan facilities from NCBs situated at Cox's bazar during the COVID pandemic. Due to having loans these salt growers tried to minimize their loss and continued their production, which were very helpful for those industries. Finally, government declared loan facilities to the affected cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises at a very minimum rate (4%), which would help to save these industries from the sudden onslaught of corona attack to Bangladesh. The affirmative actions of any public sector organizations are often ignored and through this paper an effort was taken to analyze the role and services provided of a public sector body like BSCIC.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact all over the world. There is hardly any sectors of the economy and society that is free from COVID's negative impact. Lots of efforts and resources were employed to get rid from the clutches of this pandemic. Through this paper an effort was taken to unravel the following objectives: i) To assess the impact of COVID-19 on global economy with special references to Bangladesh; ii) To look into the remedial measures undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh to overcome the COVID pandemic; iii) To have a brief overview of the status of cottage industries with special focus to BSCIC's role; iv) To look into the pro-poor services rendered by the BSCIC during COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. In fact, COVID has produced huge impact to global economy, which is a greater loss after the great economic depression in the 1930. The spill over negative impact of COVID on global economy was insurmountable. Likewise, COVID has also had a serious negative impact on Bangladesh economy and society as well.

During these COVID pandemic, many of the public, private and Non-Governmental Organizations adopted different strategies and mechanism to overcome from the COVID situation. Through this paper it was observed that BSCIC and some of its industrial units tried to face the COVID pandemic employing various pro-poor services and pragmatic initiatives to help its clientele, stakeholders, and the Bangladesh society. During the COVID pandemic, the services rendered by BSCIC included producing of different health hygiene and protective gears i.e., PPEs, surgical face masks, sanitizers, and disinfectants; dry food items; allowing delay for the borrowers to repay loans for 3 months and facilitating easy loans for the salt growers under BSCIC at Cox's Bazar, providing an incentive package for the cottage, small, micro and medium industries in Bangladesh. Such services and incentives will help them to recover the economic loss incurred by those SMEs and cottage industries gradually. It is deemed that BSCIC experience will encourage other public agencies in rendering such timely services to the people and society of Bangladesh. BSCIC authority deserves appreciation for their efficacious and efficient pro-poor services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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