Supporting domestic products, key to economic growth

Industry, of any nature, forms the backbone and core of economic development of a country that can, in any way, not be ignored. However, economists suggest that industrial development requires a systematic and structured approach that meets the requirements and needs of a particular industry.

Although increasingly dependent on foreign imports, Afghanistan produce a large number of products and if these products gain proper and government-planned support, the number of foreign imported products can be reduced significantly.

A large number of small and big factories have been operating and making efforts in the mentioned ventures for a long time in the industrial parks of Pul-e-Charkhi, Kabul. However, the park and factories have gone through many ups and downs as for the political situation of the country.

According to some of the investors, even though their production and operational level have decreased significantly, they believe that they will be able to refuel their factories if the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan supports private sector and offer investment opportunities for secured investments.

The secret behind the developed countries lies under the provision of a well structured environment for the growth and development of industry. This has resulted in promotion and popularization of the products produced in countries such as China, Japan, Germany, and other developed countries, in international markets.

As being a country recently out of severe crisis, Afghanistan requires proper base for the development of industry as well as legal and economic support. In addition, the government is responsible for building more industrial parks, and reopening and refueling the ones nonoperational. As a result, the investors will be able to confidently reinvest in the industrial parks.

Economists believe that industrial park, according to Economics, is the proper place with basic utilities such as water, electricity, and roads as well as vital necessities such as clean environment for living and appropriate surrounding for physical operations, and economic activities. Attracting investors for the production of goods needed in a society, and providing work opportunities for ordinary people are the main objectives of developing industrial parks.

It is reportedly said that tens of factories and industrial parks are currently operating all over the country and several products such as purified mineral water, beverages, dishwashing liquids, basic foodstuff, shoes, iron rods of different types, various kinds of plastic goods, sealed food cans, and several others are produced and are ready for marketing at any given time. Since the takeover of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, a number of factories had stopped operating for five months, but now they are going to be operational once again and in the northwestern Herat province, one of the industrialized regions of the country, the industrial parks have resumed their operations. It is hoped that the government will support them as a huge number of Afghans will be re-employed in these factories.

The government has also been trying to attract the investors to invest inside the country. In recent days, the UAE announced that it is willing to make investments in Afghanistan.

The UAE said that the country is ready to invest in different industrial sectors including railway and solar power plants in Afghanistan.

Mullah Mohmmad Hassan Akhund Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan received Ali Muhammad Bin Hammad Al Shamsi, UAE Minister of Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship,Customs and Ports Security.

The two Deputy Prime Ministers, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and Mawlavi Abdul Salam Hanafi and Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi were also present at the meeting, said Inamullah Samangani Taliban spokesman.

The UAE delegate said to PM Hassan Akhund that his country is willing to make investments in different sectors including developing dry ports in the southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces as well as railway and solar power plants in Afghanistan, the spokesman added.

Ali Mohammad Bin Hammad Al Shamsi recounted that ties with IEA are friendly and long-established, and that the UAE wants to strengthen the bilateral ties.

Al Shamsi said that the UAE will continue to increase its humanitarian assistance for the recovery of the country's economic situation and the Afghan people.

On his Twitter account, Inamullah Samangani tweeted that Mullah Hassan Akhund and the Deputy Prime Ministers also thanked the UAE government and insisted that there is no threat to any country of the world from the Afghan soil.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Deputy Prime Minister asked for instant assistance from the UAE government to prevent the spread of poverty in Afghanistan.

Ameni

UK economy: 2022 will start 'on a weakened footing' and 'underwhelming performance for year'

From shortages of new cars and games consoles to lorry drivers and even crisps, 2021 will be remembered by many as the year of the supply chain crisis.

Just as the economy was revving up thanks to the mammoth vaccine effort and lifting of the last remaining coronavirus restrictions, the supply crunch hit like a juggernaut.

Having pulled through from the so-called pingdemic that decimated workforces as staff were forced to self-isolate, firms were then faced with a summer of crippling shortages of HGV drivers.

Supermarket shelves were left bare, construction projects were paused due to delayed deliveries of materials and even fast food giant McDonald's ran out of milkshakes as the haulage troubles took their toll. Then the shortage of lorry drivers rippled down to the petrol pumps in September, causing mass panic-buying at forecourts and mile-long queues of motorists desperate to fill up their tanks. But the UK's lorry driver shortage was just one part of a much wider supply chain problem that was felt by economies across the world as they reopened and struggled to keep up with demand.

In the UK, it sparked the twin threat of slowing growth and soaring inflation.

Having rebounded by 5.4% in the second quarter after a lockdown-hit start to the year, growth pulled back sharply to 1.1% between July and September as shortages hit a raft of sectors.

This was accompanied by rocketing inflation as prices jumped higher due to shortages of products and as firms were forced to pay more for haulage.

But the price pressures did not just stem from supply chain woes, with Britons left facing a mounting cost of living crisis on all fronts. To the dismay of households and businesses, energy tariffs spiked higher due to a more than 500% rise in wholesale gas prices in less than a year, while steep hikes in the cost of oil also saw fuel prices shoot up.

From starting the year at 0.7%, Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation had trebled by May before surging to a decade high of 5.1% in November. But the worst is yet to come, according to the Bank of England, which has forecast inflation reaching an eye-watering 6% next April, which will be the highest for 30 years.

Under pressure to rein in inflation, it finally delivered a rise in interest rates to 0.25% from 0.1% in December.

The timing raised eyebrows, given the threat of the new Omicron variant to growth, and underscored just how concerned the Bank was about rising prices.

There was a chink of light amid the gloom, however, thanks to a jobs market that has been firing on all cylinders. Unemployment was far lower than feared amid the pandemic as the furlough support scheme proved a success in preventing mass redundancies.

Joblessness looks set to have peaked at 5.2% in the final quarter of 2020 and almost returned to levels seen before the pandemic struck, at 4.2% in the three months to October. Vacancies also hit record levels and wages jumped as firms looks to secure staff.

As the year drew to a close, there was some welcome signs that the supply chain issues that have dominated 2021 may be finally easing.

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Masdar signs pact to develop 100 MW utility-scale solar power plant in Georgia

Masdar, one of the world's leading renewable energy companies, has signed an agreement with the Georgian Energy Development Fund (GEDF) to develop a solar photovoltaic (PV) power project in the country, with a capacity of as much as 100 megawatts (MW).

The project, which will be jointly developed with the GEDF, will be Georgia's largest solar power plant, according to a report by Emirates News Agency (WAM).

The joint development agreement (JDA) was signed in the presence of Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, and Natela Turnava, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development for Georgia, in a ceremony on Wednesday at the Leadership Pavilion at Dubai Expo.

The agreement was signed by Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar, and Giorgi Chikovani, CEO of the GEDF.

Commenting on the partnership, Al Ramahi said, "This landmark agreement will support Georgia's energy diversification efforts, and will make a positive contribution on climate action. As a global leader in renewable energy, with projects in almost 40 countries, we look forward to working with the Georgian Energy Development Fund and the Government of Georgia on further renewable energy opportunities and will leverage our experience to support the nation's economic development." For his side, Chikovani said, "Georgia strongly follows its route and in accordance with the country's strategy continues its utilization of renewable energy sources. **alarabiya**

European stocks end year up 22% with Kingspan hitting a 52-week high

European shares inched lower on Friday amid surging Covid-19 infections around the world and on worries over the pace of global economic recovery from the pandemic. However, the close locked in a year of strong gains for the markets. Volumes were thin, with many traders away and most major European bourses closed, with the exceptions of London and Paris which saw shortened trading sessions.

DUBLIN

Dublin was one of the few markets to open on Friday but only for a half-day. The Iseq index closed down 0.5 per cent on thin volumes.

Insulation maker Kingspan ended the year well, hitting a 52-week high of €106 before closing down 0.5 per cent at €105.

Uniphar was another strong performer, closing up 1 per cent to €5. The company's share price has risen from €1.05 at the time of its initial public offering in July 2019. Permanent TSB was the biggest mover of the day, jumping nearly 5 per cent to €1.60, albeit in light trading. Elsewhere among the financials, Bank of Ireland closed down 1.3 per cent on €4.98 while AIB was flat at €2.14.

Other movers in Dublin on the final day of 2021 included CRH , down nearly 1 per cent to €46.52, Glanbia, which was 1.3 per cent lower at €12.30 and housebuilder Glenveagh, which climbed 1.15 per cent to €1.23.

LONDON

he FTSE 100 ended 2021 with its best annual performance in five years on the back of gains in commodity-linked and industrial stocks, although the index fell in Friday's holiday-thinned trading.

The index declined 0.3 per cent, hit by concerns around surging Covid-19 cases as the United Kingdom reported a record rise in daily infections.

British blue-chip shares gained 14.3 per cent in 2021 but underperformed their European and US peers, which have scaled multiple record highs.

Mining and industrial stocks were among the top boosters to the FTSE 100 in 2021, with miner and trader Glencore and construction supplier Ferguson both rising more than 50 per cent.

Energy stocks posted their best year since 2016, ending a three-year slump as the global economic recovery and producer restraint sparked a jump in crude oil prices. The mid-cap FTSE 250 index declined 0.3 per cent on Friday due to a drop in consumer discretionary stocks such as Watches of Switzerland Group, but was on track for its seventh consecutive quarter of gains.

EUROPE

The pan-European Stoxx 600 fell 0.1 per cent, with retail stocks leading losses. The benchmark index added 1.3 per cent this week.

The European benchmark ended the year 22 per cent higher, its second best year since 2009, with all of the major subsectors making yearly gains. Banks and tech stocks have rallied the most this year, adding 34 per cent each, while pandemic-battered travel stocks underperformed, eking out gains of 4 per cent.

More US flights cancelled as Omicron intensifies staffing issues

Hundreds of flights were cancelled Wednesday as the Omicron variant creates havoc both for travellers and for airlines that are having to cobble together flight crews as pilots, flight attendants and ground crews become infected or are exposed to others who have been.

More than 850 flights were cancelled by midday on Wednesday and that number has ticked higher throughout the day, according to data from the flight-tracking website FlightAware. There were nearly 1,300 cancellations for flights entering, leaving or inside the United States on Tuesday, and about 1,500 on Monday.

Cancellations began to spike the day before Christmas during what is already a buzzing pace for airlines this time of year.

Delta, United and JetBlue have all said that the Omicron variant was causing enough staffing issues that flights were cancelled.

SkyWest led US carriers with 195 cancellations, followed by United with 158 and Delta with 103. SkyWest, a regional airline based in Utah, has suffered an elevated level of cancellations after severe weather hit several of its hubs, but it's reporting the same staffing issues due to COVID-19.

The Pacific Northwest was slammed with cold and heavy snow during the weekend. Among US airports, Seattle-Tacoma had the highest percent of incoming and outgoing flights cancelled Wednesday, according to FlightAware.

Omicron has intensified already significant staffing issues for airlines, which winnowed workforces in 2020 as air travel collapsed, only to be broadsided when vaccination rates jumped and millions of people felt comfortable flying again this year.

That could translate to travel headaches for hundreds of thousands of people if cancellations maintain the current pace into the weekend. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) expects the Monday after New Year's will be one of the busiest days of the holiday season.

According to TSA checkpoint data, the number of people flying this holiday season far exceeds last year — before COVID-19 vaccinations were available — but still trails 2019 traveller numbers.

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Azerbaijan, Tajikistan eye trade, investment opportunities

Azerbaijan and Tajikistan have discussed the expansion of bilateral cooperation.

A videoconference meeting among representatives of Azerbaijan's Agency for Export and Investment Promotion (AZPROMO), the Agency for Small and Medium Business Development (SMBDA) and the Tajik embassy focused on bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

AZPROMO Chairman Yusif Abdullayev, SMBDA Chairman Orkhan Mammadov, Tajik Ambassador Rustam Soliev, Deputy Chairman of the Tajik Committee on Investment and State Property Management Khursheda Kodir, and other participants expressed their views and suggestions.

The participants were briefed on the business and investment climate in Azerbaijan, measures that were taken to develop SMBs, as well as the investment potential of Tajikistan.

It should be noted that the Azerbaijani-Tajik trade turnover amounted to $5.5 million in the first eight months of 2021.

Last year, trade volume between the two countries resulted in $5.2 million.

On July 20, Azerbaijan delivered 40,000 doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to Tajikistan, as part of humanitarian aid in the fight against COVID-19.