

Agora CEO speaks on “A Critical Analysis of Trend and Direction of the Retail Industry in Bangladesh.”

On March 20, the Center for Enterprise and Society (CES) at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), in conjunction with the ULAB Business Club, arranged for Mr. Christophe Echivard, CEO, Agora, to present a talk entitled “A Critical Analysis of Trend and Direction of the Retail Industry in Bangladesh.”

The talk, held at the ULAB Campus-A Auditorium, was a part of ULAB’s ongoing initiative known as the CES Speaker Series. The talk attended by the Vice Chancellor of ULAB Professor Imran Rahman as well as Directors, Heads, Researchers, other Faculty Members and Business School students.

Mr. Echivard began by discussing his professional career spanning 30 years and 7 countries, having worked with global household names in retail such as Marks & Spencer, Carrefour or Tesco. He also emphasized how he shifted from his dual degrees in law to career in retail and encouraged students to think outside the box with respect to their career choices.



With regard to the current state of retail in Bangladesh, Mr. Echivard indicated how roadside shops predominate the retail space in Bangladesh (70% of the market share), followed by municipal corporation markets (22%), and convenience stores (6%). Supermarkets still constitute a very small portion of the retail sector (around 1% of the sector).

He pointed out that the sector is still at an embryonic stage in Bangladesh. The sector is about 15 years old in Bangladesh, compared to 60-70 years in France and more than 100 years in the UK. He suggested that owners of retail outlets never perceived of themselves as comprising a sector. The sector was, until recently, a collection of individual/family businesses with limited scope for expansion.

However, Mr. Echivard was very positive about the long-term prospects of the sector in Bangladesh. He foresaw that by 2021, retail will be a US\$ 2.55 billion sector with a yearly growth of 30%, with significant potential for employment generation. He suggested that modern retail will growth because of growth in the economy; economic trade and liberalization; availability of products and decrease in prices; substantial growth of middle-class consumers; changing patterns of consumer shopping behavior; and urbanization. By 2026, he suggested that modern retail would grow to 55% of the total retail sector.

Mr. Christophe Echivard’s talk was part of the Center for Enterprise and Society’s (CES) Leadership Talk Series. The Center seeks to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges to business and societal development in Bangladesh through objective, academic study. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ulab.edu.bd/CES/home>

With regard to challenges to growth, he suggested that VAT was on uneven ground; price/rent of land is high; supply chain, inefficient; modern processes for fruit and vegetable growing, lacking; and a paucity of experienced manpower.

The event ended on a high note with a spirited Q&A session between Mr. Echivard and ULAB students, faculty and administration. After his highly informative talk, Mr. Echivard was thanked by the Vice Chancellor and presented with a crest as a token of appreciation.

Mr. Christophe Echivard's talk was part of the Center for Enterprise and Society's (CES) Leadership Talk Series. The Center seeks to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges to business and societal development in Bangladesh through objective, academic study. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ulab.edu.bd/CES/home>