



Md Nazrul Islam Mazumder, chairman of Exim Bank, and Mohammed Haider Ali Miah, managing director, attend the bank's annual business development conference for 2020 at the Renaissance Dhaka Gulshan Hotel yesterday.

Amazon asks court to pause Microsoft's work on Pentagon's JEDI contract

REUTERS

Amazon.com Inc said on Wednesday it filed a motion in court to pause the US Department of Defense and Microsoft Corp from carrying out an up to \$10 billion cloud computing deal until a court rules on its protest of the contract award.

Amazon, originally considered to be the favorite to win the award, had indicated last week that it would file a temporary restraining order to require the Pentagon and Microsoft to hold off beyond initial activities for the contract.

Known as the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure Cloud, or



JEDI, the contract is intended to give the military better access to data and technology from remote locations.

In a statement, Amazon's cloud division Amazon Web Services said, "It is common practice to stay

contract performance while a protest is pending, and it's important that the numerous evaluation errors and blatant political interference that impacted the JEDI award decision be reviewed."

The procurement process has been delayed by legal complaints and conflict of interest allegations. Most recently, Amazon has blamed US President Donald Trump for bias against the company and for improperly pressuring the Pentagon.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper has rejected that there was bias and said the Pentagon made its choice fairly and freely without external influence.

No big boost expected for US economy from trade deal

REUTERS, Bengaluru

The initial trade deal between Washington and Beijing is unlikely to provide a significant boost to the US economy and will only reduce the downside risk or at best help activity moderately, a Reuters poll showed.

While financial markets were optimistic in the run-up to and after the trade agreement - with US stocks hitting all-time highs last week - the growth and inflation outlook in the latest poll was little changed from the previous few months.

The Jan. 16-22 Reuters poll of over 100 economists - taken as business leaders gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos to be greeted by the IMF cutting its global growth forecasts again - showed a significant pickup in the US economy was not on the cards.

"The recent Phase 1 deal between the US and China suggests decreasing odds of an escalation to a full-blown trade war. However, the deal so far is not comprehensive enough to significantly boost economic momentum," said Janwillem Aket, chief economist at Julius Baer.

That was also clear from predictions for the Federal Reserve to remain on the sidelines this year and on expectations the next likely move would be a cut rather than a hike.

"It is almost a one-way bet on the Fed right now, that either they are on hold or they are easing this year. I mean there is virtually no chance of tightening," said Jim O'Sullivan, chief US macro strategist at TD Securities.

Reuters polls over the past couple of years have repeatedly pointed to the US-China trade war as the prominent downside risk for the American economy and warned it would bring the next recession closer.



Shipping containers are seen at a port in South Carolina, US.

REUTERS/FILE

Now, despite a signed trade agreement, albeit a partial one, the chances of a US recession were similar to predictions in recent months - around 20-25 percent in the next 12 months and about 30-35 percent in the next two years.

"Recession odds, which we peg at roughly one-in-four in 2020, will wax and wane with developments on the trade war front," said Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO.

"While recent progress is encouraging, we remain skeptical that a broad accord can be reached this year as complex issues, such as

state industry subsidies and forced technology transfers, still need to be resolved."

All 53 respondents polled said the latest deal would either "reduce the downside risk to the US economy" or "help US economic growth moderately." Not a single economist said it would "significantly boost growth." Reuters poll graphic on the US economic outlook here

The US economy will coast with annualized growth expected to have barely moved from the latest reported rate of 2.1 percent at the end of the forecast horizon - the second quarter of 2021.

Japan exports shrink for 13th month in fresh blow to economy

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan's exports fell for a 13th straight month in December, hurt by US-bound shipments of cars, construction and mining machinery, suggesting weak external demand is likely to remain a drag on the trade-reliant economy for a while longer.

The 6.3 percent year-on-year fall in exports was worse than a 4.2 percent decrease expected by economists in a Reuters poll. It followed a revised 7.9 percent year-on-year decline in the previous month, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) data showed on Thursday.

Analysts and policymakers say a preliminary trade deal agreed between the United States and China last week and progress on Britain's exit from the European Union would help ease worries over global trade, a key driver of Japan's economy.

Yet, the latest data showed only a modest slowing in the pace of contraction and suggests a sure-footed recovery may be months away. "Exports are likely to bottom out around this spring," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute, citing a pick-up in global semiconductor demand.

A rush in shipments ahead of the Lunar New Year holidays may have helped ease the export slowdown last month, he added, suggesting there may be a further contraction in January. "Shipments are unlikely to serve as a main engine of growth this year due to the economic slowdown in the United States and China," Minami said.

Bank of Japan policymakers have argued that solid domestic demand should help offset weak shipments and manufacturing activity. On Tuesday, the BOJ nudged up its

economic growth forecasts and sounded cautiously optimistic about the global outlook, though it said ongoing risks meant it was way too early to consider scaling down its massive stimulus.

By region, exports to China, Japan's largest trading partner, grew 0.8 percent in the year to December, led by demand for chip-making equipment, cars and plastic. It was the first annual increase in 10 months.

Shipments to the United States, the country's No. 2 trading partner, fell 14.9 percent year-on-year in December - a fifth straight month of falls - dragged down by cars, car parts and airplane motor engines, the MOF data showed. Exports to Asia, which accounts for more than half of Japan's overall shipments, decreased 3.6 percent in the year to December, it showed.

BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said on Thursday the progress in US-China trade talks and Brexit helped ease risk sentiment, but added that uncertainty remains on the trade relations between Washington and Beijing.

"While risks surrounding global growth have subsided somewhat, they remain large," he told a news conference, signaling the BOJ's resolve to keep its powerful easing.

The International Monetary Fund on Monday trimmed its 2020 global growth forecasts on sharper-than-expected slowdowns in emerging markets, but said the US-China deal was another sign that manufacturing activity may soon bottom out.

Many economists expect the world's third largest economy to have shrunk in the final quarter of last year as the US-China trade war hit exports and the Oct. 1 sales tax hike weighed on private consumption. A moderate rebound is seen in the current quarter.

RBI to hold rates on inflation concerns, fiscal revamp likely

REUTERS, Bengaluru

Rising inflation is expected to keep the Reserve Bank of India from cutting rates again until late this year, while an expansionary federal budget due next month attempts to put a floor under rapidly-slowing growth, a Reuters poll found.

Last month a rate cut at the Feb. 4-6 meeting was a close call but with the latest inflation print showing a sharp increase - accelerating to its highest in more than five years and above the upper band of the RBI's target range - the central bank will be forced to stay on the sidelines.

That is despite the Indian economy expanding at its weakest pace in over six years in the July-September quarter and the Jan. 17-22 poll of nearly 65 economists showing a sharp cut to the growth outlook for this fiscal year.

"Our expectation is that there might be higher inflation prints that you could see some moderation," said Sakshi Gupta, senior India economist at HDFC Bank.

"Given this trajectory, it would reach a stage where inflation prints are going to become more comfortable

for the RBI, we expect them to seize that opportunity and cut to support growth."

Still, in response to additional questions, all 42 economists said growth would gradually pick up in the next six months and a majority said inflation would moderate.

"A sharp pullback in credit caused growth to slow dramatically in 2019. But fiscal and monetary policy have been loosened, this should lead to a gradual recovery in investment and household spending," said Shilan Shah, senior India economist at Capital Economics.

While the RBI was the most aggressively dovish major central bank in Asia, slashing rates by a cumulative 135 basis points last year, it paused unexpectedly in December on inflation concerns. The latest poll projected the central bank to extend that pause - keeping its repo rate on hold at 5.15 percent at its February meeting and until at least October.

"Going forward, inflation is going to stay at least above target for the next 6-8 months. So, there will be very limited room for them to return to an easing bias soon in terms of cutting rates," said Radhika Rao,

economist at DBS.

The RBI was forecast to next cut rates by 25 basis points to 4.90 percent in the October-December quarter, according to the poll consensus.

Gross domestic product growth was forecast to average 5.0 percent this fiscal year, the lowest since polling began for the period in April 2018.

If that is realised, it would line up with the RBI's projection and mark its weakest pace since the financial crisis.

On Monday the IMF slashed India's prospects to 4.8 percent, making its biggest cutback for any emerging market.

The economy was then expected to expand 6.0 percent next fiscal year, a downgrade from 6.8 percent predicted in the October poll.

With the RBI not predicted to provide an additional boost over the near term, the government was expected to announce more expansionary measures at its Union Budget on Feb. 1, rather than focus on fiscal prudence, according to 30 of 50 economists who answered a separate question. The government was forecast to set a fiscal deficit target of 3.6 percent of GDP for 2020/21, up from 3.3 percent targeted for the current year, the poll found.



Shams Mahmud, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Chowdhury Mofizur Rahman, vice chancellor of United International University, exchange the signed documents of a deal at the latter's office in Dhaka on Tuesday for developing skilled manpower.

DCCI

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges
Bridges Division
Bangladesh Bridge Authority
Setu Bhaban, Banani, Dhaka-1212
www.bba.gov.bd

Ref. No: 50.01.0000.401.44.060.20-54 Date: 23/01/2020

Request for Invitation in the form of Applications
for
Engaging Individual Consultants as (i) Senior Design Engineer and (ii) Senior Procurement Specialist under Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA)

Ministry/Division	: Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges/Bridges Division.
Agency	: Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA).
Procuring entity name	: Chief Engineer, BBA.
Procuring agency code	: 131018200
Procuring entity district	: Dhaka
Request for application for selection of	: Individual National Consultants (Time Based).
Request for application Ref. No.	: 50.01.0000.401.44.060.20-54
Date	: 23 January 2020
Source of fund	: Government of Bangladesh.
Brief description of assignment, qualification and experience requirements	: (i) Senior Design Engineer. (ii) Senior Procurement Specialist. The detailed Terms of Reference, qualification and experience requirements for each position are given in the "Request for Application". The same can be downloaded from the website BBA <www.bba.gov.bd>.
Other details	: Interested Consultants are invited to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services. This shall require substantiation of their submitted CVs and other documents described in the Request for Application (RFA). Applicants may obtain RFA document, for each position, from the BBA website www.bba.gov.bd or can be obtained through email sending a request at ohidbba@gmail.com. A shortlist of consultants will be prepared upon evaluation of eligible applicants and invited for interview. The services are required for a period of 24 months from commencement. Interested applicants may obtain further information on the requirements including the criteria for shortlisting by applying to the address below/e-mailing.
EOI (application) closing date & time	: 16 February 2020, 5:00pm (BST).
Name of official inviting EOI	: Quazi Muhammad Ferdous.
Designation of official inviting EOI	: Chief Engineer, BBA.
Address of official inviting EOI	: Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA), Setu Bhaban, New Airport Road, Banani, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh.
Contact details of official inviting EOI	: Tel: 55040313, Fax: +880 255040444, E-mail: cebba2019fs@gmail.com
The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever.	

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