









STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES						
DSEX	CSCX		Gold		Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY	
 0.63%	 0.83%		\$1,646.80		\$56.33	 0.20%	 3.34%	 0.51%	 0.60%	BUY TK	83.95	90.35	107.98	11.82
4,621.19	8,583.76		(per ounce)		(per barrel)	40,281.20	22,605.41	3,158.24	3,013.05	SELL TK	84.95	94.15	111.78	12.43

SC questions BB findings on embezzlement at International Leasing

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Supreme Court yesterday raised questions about the Bangladesh Bank's findings into the embezzlement of funds from International Leasing and Financial Services (ILFS), a non-bank financial institution.

"Is there any jugglery with figures [in the central bank's findings]?" questioned a three-member bench of the Appellate Division.

Mahmud Hossain, raised the question during a hearing on an appeal filed by ILFS's two shareholder-directors challenging the directives of the High Court.

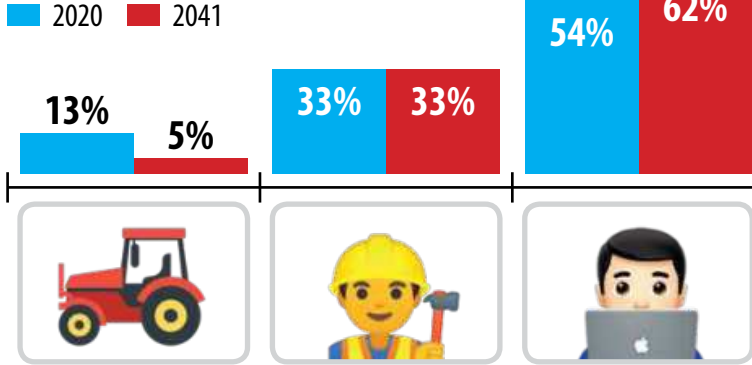
Proshanta Kumar Halder, also known as PK Halder, a former managing director of NRB Global Bank and Reliance Finance, was involved in the embezzlement of Tk 3,500 crore, according to media reports. But the central bank put the figure at Tk 1,596 crore.

The central bank found that Tk 1,596 crore was transferred from ILFS in violation of rules through 48 accounts of various organisations related to the directors and shareholders of the NBFIs, he said.

Poorly managed exchange rate, ad hoc-based incentive and existing domestic protection levels will not make Bangladesh's exports competitive and help diversify both products and destinations, according to a new plan of the government.

The National Economic Council (NEC) at its meeting at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday approved the plan. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, chairman of the NEC, presided over the meeting.

In the plan, export diversification and competitiveness in the global market have been identified



overvaluation of the currency is one of the most robust imperatives that can be gleaned from diverse experience with economic growth around the world and one that appears to be strongly supported by cross-country statistical evidence.

export expansion, the appropriate exchange rate management would be to avoid rigidity or real appreciation of the real effective exchange rate (REER).

About the trade policy stance, the plan said perhaps the single most important determinant of export competitiveness is the incentive regime emerging from trade policy.

It could, however, come through providing garment-like free trade channel to existing and potential exports.

Bangladesh's trade regime needs further rationalisation and modernisation of the tariff regime, it said.

GSK Bangladesh ricochets to profits

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With the view to preventing any more losses, the board decided to bring down the curtains on the business.

In 2018, there were significant costs incurred for the factory closure in the form of severance payment to employees and so on, due to which

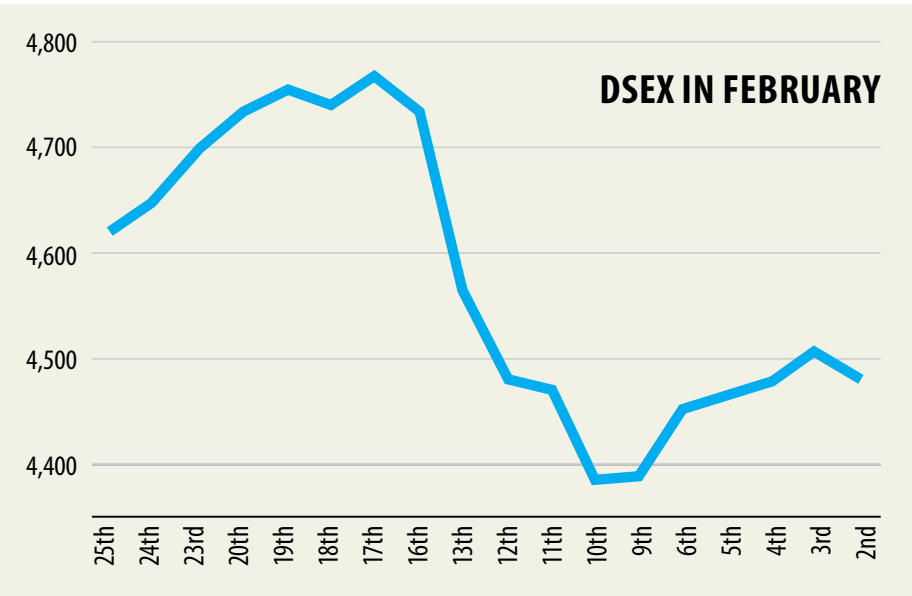
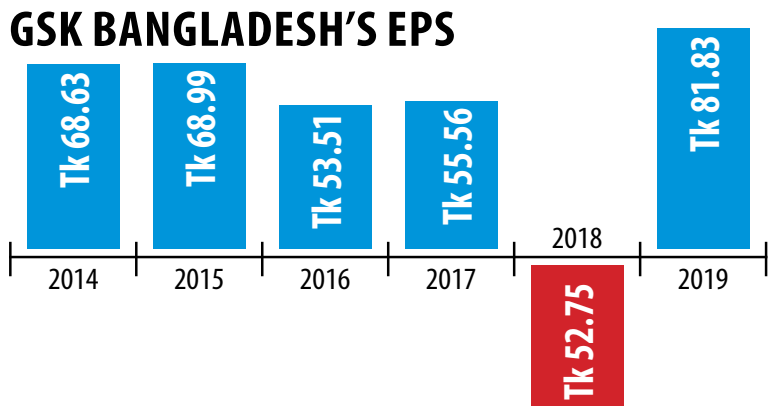
In 2019, the impact of discontinued business was minimal. And there were some cost-saving activities too, according to the company's posting on the Dhaka Stock Exchange website.

GSK's earnings per share (EPS) went up to Tk 81.83, up from Tk 52.75 in the negative in 2018.

The news of high profits sent the company's stocks up 1.23 pTk 1,867 yesterday. GSK made its debut on DSE in 1976.

"The pharma unit was a money guzzler," said a top official of the company preferring anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with the media.

Now, shareholders are reaping the benefits of the decision, he added.



Stocks continued to fall in the last consecutive four days on the back of Grameenphone's share slide and growing fear of contracting earnings of banks.

In the last four days the index plunged

The country's leading mobile operator's stocks slid 8.4 per cent in the last two days after it was ordered by the Supreme Court on Monday to pay Tk 1,000 crore within three months. Grameenphone had deposited Tk 1,000 crore to the state coffers just the previous day.

READ MORE ON B3

Quasem Industries to set up an artificial quartz factory for Tk 92cr

Quasem Industries, a listed dry cell and food product producer, yesterday announced its plan to set up an artificial quartz product manufacturing factory at a cost of about Tk 92 crore as part of its strategy to diversify its portfolio.

The company's turnover dropped about 8 per cent year-on-year to Tk 185.5 crore in the 2018-19 financial year. At the same time, profits plummeted 39.2 per cent.

Artificial quartz, also called engineered quartz, is a manmade product created mostly from natural materials.

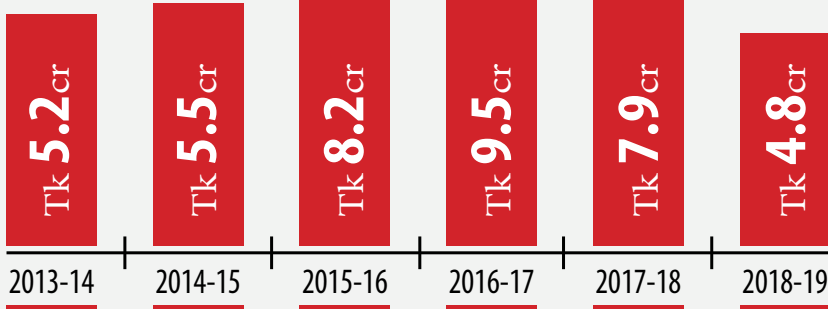
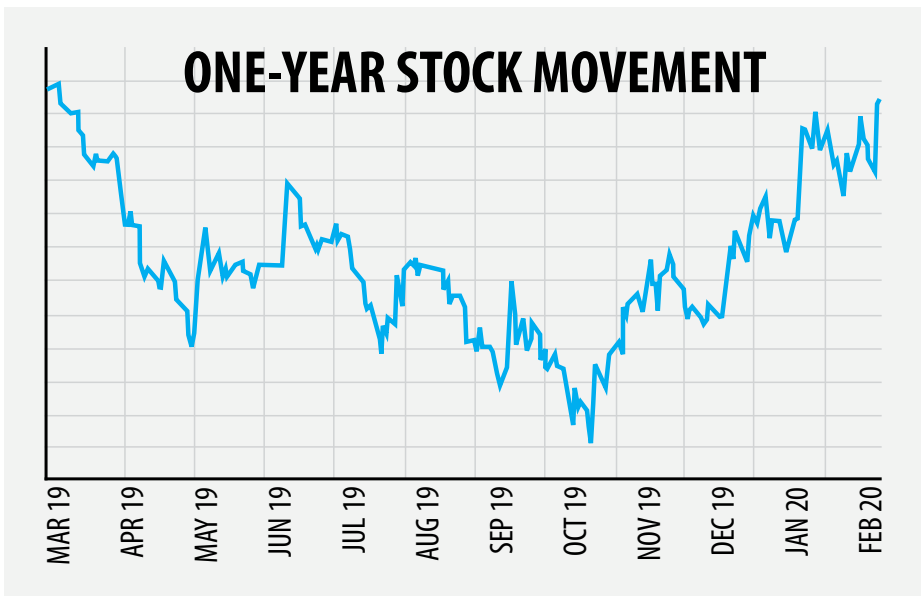
Additionally, the cost of utilities continues to rise in Bangladesh as does the cost of distribution and transportation increased.

It is made of 90 to 94 per cent ground quartz and 6 to 10 per cent resins and pigments that are combined into durable and nonporous slabs.

The company's costs rose 35.12 per cent to Tk 5.54 crore in the last year.

However, Quasem Industries is trying to bounce back. The company has already rolled out "Wave" brand of air freshener and body spray.

And this year it is planning to introduce shaving foam and aerosol, which may boost its turnover in the coming years.





Salman F Rahman, the prime minister's private industry and investment adviser, poses for a photo with trade association leaders at a lunch hosted in their honour by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) at its Police Plaza Concord office in Dhaka yesterday.

US economy faces long-lasting damage from trade war: Fed official

AFP, Washington

The trade conflict of the past two years likely left a mark on the US economy, even with the recent agreement to defuse the situation, a Federal Reserve official said Monday.

The outbreak of the new

assess the magnitude of the economic effects, but this new source of uncertainty is something I will be carefully monitoring," she said of the epidemic.

With the partial agreement signed with China to call a truce in the dispute with Beijing -- despite leaving

likely," she said in a speech to the National Association for Business Economics.

While the reduced uncertainty means businesses that had put plans on hold might now be more likely to invest, some foreign companies "have reoriented their supply chains away from US firms, which means these exports may be permanently lost." Sluggish investment, too, is a source of concern.

"Without investment in new technologies and capital, productivity will continue to be weak, dampening the economy's growth potential and living standards," Mester, a voting member of the Fed's interest rate setting committee this year, was relatively upbeat about the economy, which she said should continue to perform well with a strong job market and growth around two percent, slightly slower than last year.

The epidemic in China casts a cloud of uncertainty over the outlook, she cautioned, and is hard to compare with past health issues, like the SARS epidemic in 2003, which caused a minor slowing in the US economy.

"China was not as big a player in the global economy back then as it is today, so there is the potential for a larger impact," if supply chains are disrupted or investment postponed, she said.

"On the other hand, China now has more resources with which to address the epidemic than it had in 2003," which might mean "less protracted" damage to the economy.



Donald Trump

coronavirus in China adds another risk factor to the outlook, which otherwise seemed poised to provide steady growth, said Loretta Mester, president of the Federal Reserve's regional bank in Cleveland.

"At this point, it is difficult to

many tariffs in place -- as well as a new continental free trade pact with Canada and Mexico, Mester said the trade picture is "somewhat better" heading into 2020.

"Nevertheless, some long-lasting effects arising from the trade war are

Citi, Credit Suisse curbing Italy trips on pandemic fears

REUTERS, London

Investment banks including Citigroup Inc, Credit Suisse and Nomura Holdings Inc have curbed trips to Italy on fears that the coronavirus outbreak across the north of the country could quickly spread across Europe, four sources told Reuters.

Citi has told staff heading to Italy's financial capital Milan or other northern cities to postpone their trips or seek approval from top management if they are working on sensitive deals, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity as banking policies are confidential.

Credit Suisse has also informed bankers looking to travel to and from Northern Italy including airports in Milan and Bologna that they will require extra permissions, two of the sources said.

Nomura has instead taken a more rigorous approach putting all countries affected by coronavirus deaths on a blacklist, including Italy and France, and banning staff from travelling there, they said.

The Japanese bank has also told employees working locally in Milan and Paris that they cannot book business trips to visit clients abroad, one of the sources said.

"They are all grounded," this source said referring to Nomura's bankers.

Citi, Credit Suisse and Nomura declined to comment.

The curbs come as coronavirus infections have soared across northern Italy over the past few days, causing seven deaths and more than 200 cases.

It is the first time banks have restricted trips within Europe as most financial institutions have so far only applied travel bans to mainland China, imposing a 14-day quarantine to those who had recently returned.

\$474b erased from European stocks for coronavirus

REUTERS

A rush of coronavirus cases outside China wiped nearly \$474 billion off the value of European stock markets on Monday, as investors reassessed the likely impact of the outbreak turning into a pandemic.

A 5.4 per cent slump saw Milan shares marking their worst day since mid-2016, as Italy reported the biggest flare-up of the virus in Europe with at least six deaths and more than 200 infections, which is likely to further upset the country's already ailing economy.

The pan-European STOXX 600 dropped 3.8 per cent to 411.86, posting its biggest intra-day percentage slump since Britain voted to exit the European Union in June 2016.

A surge in infections in South Korea and Iran prompted widespread moves out of equities and into safe havens.

"Today signifies that markets did not expect this to become a major issue outside of China," said Craig Erlam, a senior market analyst at Oanda. "Investors are going to be far more sensitive now." "Arguably (there's been) an element of complacency over the course of last month because there's just been a general belief that it will get better - this kind of mentality has not helped." Both European and US stock markets have been on a decade-long bull run since the financial crisis, and the benchmark European index was trading at record highs as recently as last Wednesday, confident that

the outbreak's impact would be limited to China.

Airlines were among the worst performers on the STOXX 600, with EasyJet, Ryanair, Air France and Lufthansa down between 7.4 per cent and 12.6 per cent. Europe's travel & leisure index tumbled 6 per cent and was the weakest regional sector.

Broad-based declines on the index sent luxury goods makers, miners, automakers, chipmakers and banking shares - which all tend to be tightly sensitive to expectations of global growth - down between 4 per cent and 6 per cent.

Fears of the economic impact from the outbreak bolstered expectations - already at 50 per cent - that the European Central Bank will cut interest rates by 10 basis points in July.

German shares fell 4 per cent, shrugging off an Ifo survey that showed business morale rose unexpectedly in February.

Juventus slumped 11.8 per cent after the Serie A leader posted a net loss of 50.3 million euros in the first half, compared to a profit a year earlier.

Bank of Ireland fell 5.2 per cent after its underlying pretax profit fell for the fourth successive year and the lender added it would take longer than forecast to hit a return on tangible equity (ROTE) above 10 per cent.

Only six stocks on the STOXX 600 ended higher for the day, led by educational services provider Pearson Plc as it bounced back from a steep fall on Friday.

Shah Masud Imam, chief operating officer of Dhaka Ice Cream Industries, handed over a motor scooter to Rokibul Islam at its Ashulia depot yesterday as the prize of a "Polar Ice Cream Scooty-Foorti" campaign.

POLAR ICE CREAM



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of Jail Super
Faridpur District Jail

Memo No. 58.04.2900.104.04.009.2020.636Date: 24.02.2020

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concerned that the following tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing, closing date & time
1	431910	Supply of Unnatamaner Mashur Dal (Mota) for the period of April/20 to September/20	23-Feb-2020 11:00:00, 09-Mar-2020 11:00:00
2	431911	Supply of Unnatamaner Cholar Dal for the period of April/20 to September/20	23-Feb-2020 11:00:00, 09-Mar-2020 11:00:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Mohammad Abdur Rahim
Jail Super
Faridpur District Jail

GD-359

Travel giant Expedia to cut 3,000 jobs

AFP, Washington

Online travel giant Expedia will cut 3,000 jobs worldwide after what the company called a "disappointing" performance in 2019, US media reported Monday.

The firm, which operates its flagship travel site as well as Hotels.com, Hotwire, Travelocity, CheapTickets, Egencia and CarRentals.com, said the decision was made after determining it had been "pursuing growth in an unhealthy and undisciplined way," according to an email sent to staff.

"I am confident that simplifying our business and clarifying our focus by making these difficult changes, our teams can get back to working on the projects and priorities that make the most sense for us, our customers and our partners," said Expedia chairman Barry Diller in a statement to The Seattle Times.

During a February 13 earnings call, Diller called the organization "bloated" and said many employees didn't know what "they were supposed to do during the day." Diller also said he was aiming for savings of \$300-500 million in 2020.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Balaganj, Sylhet
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.000.9108.14.057.19-82Date: 24/01/2020

Tender Notice

Tender Notice No. 11/2019-2020

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works as stated below:

Sl No.	Package No.	Tender ID No.	Tender method
1	e-Tender/PEDP4/SLT/BAI/2019-20/W17.00836	430395	Open
2	e-Tender/PEDP4/SLT/BAI/2019-20/W17.00835	430393	Open
3	e-Tender/PEDP4/SLT/BAI/2019-20/W17.00834	430390	Open

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited through online at any branches of registered bank up to 12/03/2020, 13:00.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The Tender Notice will be available on the website: www.lged.gov.bd

S.R.M.G. Kibria
Upazila Engineer
LGED, Balaganj, Sylhet
Phone: 01708-161685
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GD-360

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Sadar, Noakhali.
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.0087.000.07.01.20-176

Invitation for Tender (Works)

e-Tender Notice No: 10/2019-2020

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Sl No.	Package No	Name of work	Tender Last selling (date & time)	Tender Closing (date & time)	Tender Opening (date & time)	Tender ID No
01	e-Tender/ PEDP4/NKL/SAD /2019-20/ W1.00454	Construction of additional class room Amaniah Ancharia Govt. GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila.	18-Mar-2020 12:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	430156
02	e-Tender/ PEDP4/NKL/SAD /2019-20/ W1.00455	Construction of additional class room Rowaldia Govt. GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila.	18-Mar-2020 12:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	430185
03	e-Tender/ PEDP4/NKL/SAD /2019-20/ W1.00456	Construction of additional class room Dadpur Govt. GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila.	18-Mar-2020 12:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	430319
04	e-Tender/ PEDP4/NKL/SAD /2019-20/ W1.00457	Construction of additional class room Kazirtak Govt. GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila.	18-Mar-2020 12:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	18-Mar-2020 13:30	430324

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches up to 12.30PM on 18-Mar-2020.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) or egphelpdesk@lged.gov.bd.

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Upazila Engineer
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Phone No: 0321-61334.
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GD-358

CAs have a vital role to play for country's growth: Kamal

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The government is working to ensure an inclusive growth for equitable distribution of wealth and for that the chartered accountants have an important role to play, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said.

"We are working for the people, especially the underprivileged, and trying to bring them in the development process so that they could chase a dream of how to come out from the poverty and hunger."

The minister spoke at a programme titled "Listen to the leader" organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) at CA Bhaban in Dhaka on Monday.

The government is determined to ensure that the underprivileged people get the benefits of the development works, Kamal said.

The government has a clear vision to make the country poverty and hunger free by 2030 and become a developed nation by 2041, he said.

The chartered accountants are definitely a part of this development route, he said.

"We have many challenges. Commitments from professionals, including CAs, are required to address these challenges."

The professionals like chartered accountants should contribute more for the progress of the country, he said.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman not only dreamt of an independent country, he also dreamt of economic emancipation of the people, Kamal said.

"Everyone has to bear this philosophy in their hearts and come forward to work for the people."

He also urged the CAs to follow the idealism to achieve the sustainable development goals.

Professionals should concentrate more to create a business-friendly atmosphere so that the country advances in the ease of doing business index globally, the minister said. Foreign investors are coming to Bangladesh considering it to be an ideal place for investment and safe return out of it, he said.

ICAB and its members are firmly committed to become a partner of the government's initiatives for economic development of the country, said ICAB President Muhammad Farooq.

The CAs would come forward to take up any role wherever assigned, he said.

Few hundreds of chartered accountants and auditors of listed companies attended the programme.

'Exciting time for increasing already-strong US-Bangladesh trade and investment ties'

FROM PAGE B4

Leading American companies like DSC Dredge and Ellicott Dredges have helped make Bangladeshi rivers and waterways usable again, while John Deere is doing excellent work to stimulate increased mechanisation of the agriculture sector in Bangladesh, thereby enhancing overall farm productivity, she said.

"And Chevron has grown alongside Bangladesh for the past quarter century. It is the largest single producer of natural gas in Bangladesh -- powering about 40 per cent of the country."

Besides, 95 per cent of Chevron's employees are Bangladeshi -- not workers brought in from elsewhere, but local workers who, by working for American companies, can provide for their families.

"Those are just a few examples of how American companies help build the economy -- and the relationship between the US and Bangladesh."

The trade show was first organised in 1992. Since the beginning of the show, Bangladesh has experienced steady economic growth and progress, leading to an expansion of US-Bangladesh bilateral trade from \$57 million to \$9 billion in 2019.

"The United States believes in free market principles, and that the innovation and drive of the private sector, is the best ways to foster long-lasting economic growth and development."

This trade show is an opportunity to see for yourself how the vibrant US business community is working together with the equally dynamic people of Bangladesh, to the benefit of both of our countries," Wagner added.

The annual trade show is one of the major activities that the AmCham Bangladesh undertakes with a view to stimulating greater understanding about each other's business potential and opportunities.

Four seminars on different issues will also be organised on the sidelines of the exhibition.

After the trade show, attractive prizes will be given under a raffle draw among the few lucky winners chosen from the visitors.

Syed Mohomammad Kamal, vice president of AmCham, and Showkat Ali Sarkar, member of the chamber, also spoke at the press conference.

The fair will remain open for visitors from 10am to 8pm. The entry fee for the show is Tk 30. Students in uniform or with identity cards will enjoy free access.

Apex Pharma gets Congo's clearance to export medicines

FROM PAGE B4

"This achievement has opened a new opportunity for the locally manufactured world-class medicines. This is a big milestone for the medicine industry as well as for the country as it will directly contribute to the overall economy," he said.

Apex Pharma will now move to have its six products registered for exports to Congo

as well other central African countries, Hossen said.

The company is also in the process of registering its products for exports to Afghanistan, Guinea, Mali and Yemen, he said, adding that the company currently sells 135 products in the domestic market.

Dilip Kajuri, a director of Apex Pharma, was present at the event.

Chinese restaurants starved for cash as virus hits industry

AFP, Beijing

It is lunch time in Beijing, but the only diner in Cindy's Cafe is an employee having a staff meal -- it has been closed for more than three weeks as China battles a deadly virus epidemic.

Restaurants are taking a huge hit as many people across the country of 1.4 billion have been either under some form of quarantine or are reluctant to venture outside since late January over fears of contagion.

which has more than 10 outlets in China, could be "at least a few million (yuan)" given rent and unused stock from the unexpected Lunar New Year closures.

"If there is no business, staff may be asked to take more days off," said Cai.

Many restaurants have suspended dine-ins to help curb the spread of the virus, but eateries that have resumed operations remain largely empty, with people still encouraged to stay home to avoid infections.



AFP

Fears over coronavirus sweeping across the country have had a devastating effect on dine-in business for eateries such as this restaurant in Beijing.

At Cindy's Cafe in Beijing's Roosevelt Plaza, dine-in revenue has fallen to zero, and relying on deliveries hardly makes up the shortfall, said manager Cai Yaoyang.

"On a good day in the past, we could earn over 1,000 yuan (\$143) a day from deliveries," Cai told AFP.

"Now, it's just around 200 to 300 yuan a day. The impact is especially big," He estimates losses to the company,

The new coronavirus has killed more than 2,400 in China and infected nearly 77,000.

An outlet of Bellagio Cafe, another restaurant chain, employee Zhu Xiangying told AFP it had only made 30,000 yuan in around 10 days, compared with over 200,000 yuan in normal times.

The China Cuisine Association said in a report this month that the

Tesco completes China exit with \$357m stake sale

REUTERS, London

Britain's biggest retailer Tesco has completed its exit from China with the 275 million pound (\$357 million) sale of its joint venture stake to state-run partner China Resources Holdings (CRH).

Having struggled to crack the Chinese market, Tesco established the Gain Land venture with CRH in 2014, combining the British group's 131 stores in China with its partner's almost 3,000.

The disposal of its 20 per cent stake allows Tesco to further simplify and focus the business on core operations, it said on Tuesday, adding that the proceeds will be used for general corporate purposes.

The deal is scheduled to complete on Feb. 28.

Shares in Tesco were up 0.7 per cent at 0816 GMT, extending its gains over the last year to 12.4 per cent.

"This extra 275 million pounds of 'forgotten value' should be accretive to most street valuations," said Bernstein analyst Bruno Monteyne.

After costly exits from Japan and the United States and the sale of its South Korean business, Tesco signalled in December a further retreat from its once lofty global ambitions by starting a review of its operations in Thailand and Malaysia - its last remaining wholly owned businesses in Asia.

A sale of its operations in Thailand and Malaysia would mean Tesco's only remaining overseas operations, apart from Ireland, would be its central European division, comprising stores in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

SC questions BB findings on embezzlement at International Leasing

FROM PAGE B1

The chief justice said: "We heard that only one person took away Tk 3,500 crore from the company. Is there any jugglery with figures in your findings?"

In reply, Alam said: "I don't want to make any comment about newspaper reports. PK Halder was involved in the misappropriation of Tk 1,596 crore. We don't have any information about the misappropriation of Tk 3,500 crore from the company."

The central bank slapped a fine of Tk 10 lakh on each of the persons involved in the embezzlement and wrote to the Anti-Corruption Commission to take action against them, he said.

Khondker Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the BB who has been appointed as an independent chairman of ILFS by the HC, told the court that it was difficult to keep the NBFI afloat as its condition has deteriorated since 2016.

If the central bank adopts a special scheme, the company might be saved, he said.

"About Tk 1,600 crore from ILFS was embezzled by some people. But there was no scope to look into the reasons behind the misappropriation of the ILFS money and we don't know about the last man who

had received the money," he added.

Ahsanul Karim, a lawyer for ILFS, told the court that if the company is wound up, many directors and shareholders will suffer and the condition of the financial sector will worsen.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam represented the state and Barrister Tanjib-ul Alam appeared for the BB.

Following a petition filed by seven depositors of ILFS, the HC on January 19 banned all current shareholder-directors and top executives of the NBFI from leaving the country, including PK Halder.

As per media reports in Canada, Halder is residing in Canada and is the director of a company named P&L Hal Holding Inc. there.

The HC also directed the authorities not to transfer any of their movable and immovable properties, including stock, cash money and cars to any persons or entities until disposal of the case.

The home affairs secretary was directed to seize the passports of all the present shareholder-directors and the top executives of the company and collect detailed information about them.

Later two shareholder-directors of the NBFI filed an appeal with the Appellate Division against the HC directive.



Khondaker Muhammad Aminur Rahman, second from left, member (customs audit, modernisation and international trade) of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), takes part in a workshop titled "Ease of Doing Business: Trading Across Borders" jointly organised by Economic Reporters Forum (ERF), the NBR and International Finance Corporation at the ERF's office in Dhaka yesterday.

Robust exchange rate critical for sustained growth

FROM PAGE B1

To continue on a path of sustainable export growth with a diversified basket of goods, Bangladesh faces an immediate challenge to restructure its tariff regime in order to gradually phase out effective protection levels and anti-export bias, it said.

The plan suggested four steps to diversify exports.

Import regime must be made seamless to facilitate duty-free imported input into exports. The incentive structure for export must be set right by ensuring that relative incentives for export and import substitute production are about the same.

Lowering the cost of trade-related services like transport, logistics and energy infrastructure to export, it said.

Proactive policies, such as helping exporters upgrade existing products, break into geographic markets, and

launch and consolidate new line of business abroad, might be important in respect of the limited capacity of the government.

The government has taken a positive fiscal stance to promote exports. The garment sector is the highest beneficiary of the various fiscal concessions.

In addition to the duty drawback scheme accorded to all exporters, the garment exporters enjoy the special privilege of paying only a nominal income tax on their earnings.

In addition, the government offers direct cash subsidy for export of non-traditional items, with the rate varying from 5 per cent on jute yarn to 20 per cent on halal meat and potatoes in the current year.

"Fiscal incentive should not be ad hoc. The basis should be a potential competitive advantage determined by research evidence. For all the fiscal incentives for exports, they are no

match to the high tariff protection received by import substitutes," the plan said.

Port services, road rail network, rail system, air freight and airport storage services, ease of doing business and addressing low labour productivity and skill gap are crucial for export competitiveness, the plan said.

The plan targets to raise the contribution of the service sector to the economy to 62 per cent from existing 54 per cent during the period.

The government also wants to increase the share of the industrial sector to 40 per cent by 2031 before bringing it down to 33 per cent by 2041.

The contribution of agriculture will gradually come down to 5 per cent by the end of the plan period.

The per capita income of Bangladesh will reach \$12,500 in 2041 from \$1,909 now, said Planning Minister MA Mannan.



Bank Asia gets new independent director

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bank Asia recently saw the election of an independent director.

Prof MA Baqui Khalily is a renowned academician, economist and finance scholar, says a press release. He is currently teaching at the Department of Business Administration of the University of Asia Pacific.

He has served as executive director of the Institute of Microfinance, vice chancellor (acting) of Presidency University, chairman of the Department of Finance at the University of Dhaka and director of Dhaka Stock Exchange.

Khalily's publications in national and international journals are focused on rural finance, financial inclusion, microfinance and SME development.

He attained bachelor's and master's degrees in finance from the University of Dhaka prior to obtaining MSc and PhD degrees with major in finance and development from The Ohio State University.

Food safety body plans GMO labelling on products

FROM PAGE B4

"In my opinion, we should let GM foods be left open to customer choice. There should be a declaration on whether the product is a GM food or not. We are yet to introduce this. This is a major bottleneck for us. But we will definitely overcome this."

He went on to point out that food such as lentil and oilseed are being brought in from abroad, Kabir said no importer made any declaration on whether it was GM or not.

"We are yet to ensure that the food arriving at the port be declared either a GMO or non-GMO. This is a major

shortcoming." Kabir said his office would request the customs authority to ensure this declaration.

Tension and confusion still exist regarding transgenic foods. "We must cross the border," he added.

"This is something new. That is why have to be careful," said Vibha Ahuja, chief general manager of Biotech Consortium India.

No adverse effect has been seen for the GM foods that have been approved since 1996.

To ensure safety of biotech food, implementation of biosafety procedures is a must, said SABB

Country Manager Aparna Islam.

Md Zakir Hossain Howlader, a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of Dhaka, emphasised on labelling and developing a surveillance system for GM crops.

The country should develop its capacity to assess the nutritional quality and other aspects of biotech crops, said RH Sarker, chairman of the Department of Botany at the University of Dhaka.

Andrew F Roberts, deputy executive director of ILSI Research Foundation, also spoke among others.

Bourse deflated by news from Grameenphone, banking sector

FROM PAGE B1

The payments will eat into the operator's reserves, meaning the Grameenphone board might decide to announce lower cash dividend come next year.

On the other hand, stock investors are also concerned about the profitability of the banking sector after the interest rate cap of 6 and 9 per cent for deposits and loans respectively, they said.

On Monday, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) formally asked lenders to set a maximum 9 per cent interest on all loan products save for credit cards from April 1.

"This development might put downward pressure on the profitability of most banks," said UCB Capital in its daily stock market analysis.

The 6 per cent ceiling on interest rate for deposits might send savers to the stock market, said a merchant banker requesting anonymity.

"This could be a good thing for the market."

Some of the investors though made a killing in the last as the index edged up 370 points in the previous seven days, the merchant banker added.

International Leasing Securities said in its daily market analysis that the massive sell pressure was observed

in banking sector riding on the news of the BB's notice to banks on Monday.

Apart from this, pharma, fuel and power, financial institutions and food sectors also observed selling spree.

Turnover, another important indicator of the stock market, rose 4.8 per cent yesterday to Tk 629.6 crore.

Brac Bank, which fell 7.7 per cent, was the most traded share with a turnover of Tk 20 crore, followed by VFS Thread, Indo-Bangla Pharmaceuticals, Grameenphone and Orion Infusion. Among the major sectors, telecommunication fell 2 per cent, banks 1.5 per cent and pharmaceuticals down 0.4 per cent.

Food safety body plans GMO labelling on products

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) is planning on making declaration of genetically-modified (GM) crop in food products mandatory, said its chairman yesterday.

A genetically modified organism, or GMO, is an organism that has had its DNA altered or modified in some way through genetic engineering. In most cases, GMOs have been altered with DNA from another organism, be it a bacterium, plant, virus or animal; these organisms are sometimes referred to as “transgenic” organisms.

There is a huge distrust amongst the public about the safety of GMO crops.

“Every product, be it packaged, processed or imported, must have a declaration stating whether this is GM or not. We will issue a directive in this regard soon,” said BFSA

Chairman (in charge) Manbub Kabir.

He was addressing a workshop on requirements for compliance and consumer awareness regarding GM food, jointly organised by the BFSA and South Asia Biosafety Programme (SABP) at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Dhaka.

Kabir made the disclosure after some discussants pointed out that Bt brinjal is being marketed with no mention in labels or declarations that the popular vegetable is a biotech crop, depriving customers from making preference-based purchases.

The government released Bt brinjal, which is infused with pest-resistant genes, for



cultivation in 2013 as part of its fight against the fruit and shoot borer, a moth species causing largescale devastation and losses for farmers. The seeds were later provided to farmers.

The law makes it mandatory for GM food labels to declare their identities but it was being flouted at the marketing stage, said BFSA Member Monzur Morshed Ahmed.

“Labelling requirements established by regulations are currently being sidestepped,” he said, adding that consumers should be ensured an enabling environment allowing them to pick out what they want and do not.

Products are untraceable once released into the supply chain, he said, suggesting for

inter-agency coordination and enforcement of regulations to strengthen efforts.

Ahmed also stressed on enhancing laboratory capacities in Bangladesh to enhance toxicity and allergenicity assessments.

Bangladesh does not have the capacity to verify any given data or information through scientific analysis.

In the decision-making processes, regulators rely solely on information provided by the developer or applicant, he said, while stressing on holding appropriate public consultations and taking public opinion into consideration.

“Necessity of commercial release must be established and justified,” Ahmed added.

BFSA Chairman Kabir cited that the Bt brinjal, which is now being cultivated, is coming to the market but in no properly labelled package.

READ MORE ON B3

Apex Pharma gets Congo’s clearance to export medicines

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Apex Pharma has received the good manufacturing practices certificate from Congo, a development that will open the door for the local medicine-maker to export pharmaceutical products to 11 central African countries.

The certificate came from the Directorate of Pharmacy & Medicine under the public health ministry of Congo.

Sayed Hossen, head of marketing of Apex Pharma, received the certificate from Ziauddin Adil and Nazir Alam, honorary consuls of Bangladesh consulate of the Republic of Congo, recently in Dhaka, according to a press release.

Bangladesh has been exporting medicines to many countries for a long time, but the volume is relatively less in 11 central African countries, said Alam, designated honorary consul of the consulate.

READ MORE ON B3

It’s the actuaries who make the insurance sector sing

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

MetLife Bangladesh has taken a set of initiatives to popularise the actuarial profession with a view to making the inert insurance sector vibrant, said Andrew D Rallis, global chief actuary of the American insurer.

“Insurance is an important part of the economy, so there is an urgency to develop the actuarial profession,” he told The Daily Star in an interview recently. Rallis, who is based in the US, called in to Bangladesh earlier this month.

Inclusive economic growth of a nation has strong links with the insurance sector. As Bangladesh’s economy is growing fast, the insurance sector should get a better shape.

There is an operational and business risk for insurance companies if they set premiums and reserves for clients without calculations by an actuary.

“If an insurance company suffers, it is not



good for the industry, regulators and the population as a whole.”

An actuary applies mathematical and statistical models to specific institutional and financial problems based on solid knowledge of business context and behavioural implication. Knowledge of actuarial science is the base of actuarial profession.

Actuaries, who are trained in the theory and applications of mathematics, statistics, economics and finance, apply their analytical skills to manage financial and other risks stemming from running business of insurance.

MetLife, the largest life insurer in Bangladesh, has been providing scholarships to students of the University of Dhaka for the last three years to promote the professional growth of actuaries, said Rallis, who is an executive vice-president of MetLife.

The students of the applied mathematics department of the university are eligible for



Andrew D Rallis

companies.

“Everyone needs to understand the importance of insurance in order to realise the merit of the actuarial profession.”

If an individual or entity face unexpected things, insurance companies provide financial support as per the commitments made under coverage.

“Commitments made by insurance companies help people plan a life in a way that provides peace of mind. As a result, they will not feel too much worry even if things go bad in life unexpectedly.”

An actuary calculates the risk factors of clients by analysing their age, sex, occupation and health condition and the insurance company sets premiums for customers based upon the risk factors.

“People whose risk factors are high should pay more premiums. An actuary assesses the risk factors in order to set aside required reserves for the clients. For this reason, actuary has a great role in bringing peace in people’s mind. That’s why I became an actuary. It is one of the best tools to serve the society.”

According to Rallis, artificial intelligence (AI) will help the actuarial profession in the days ahead as it will enable accurate prediction of risk factors.

Actuaries will receive support by using AI and this will increase the value of the profession, Rallis said.

The profession is highly popular in North American countries and it is also getting traction in Asian countries.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and some other Asian countries are focusing on developing the insurance sector.

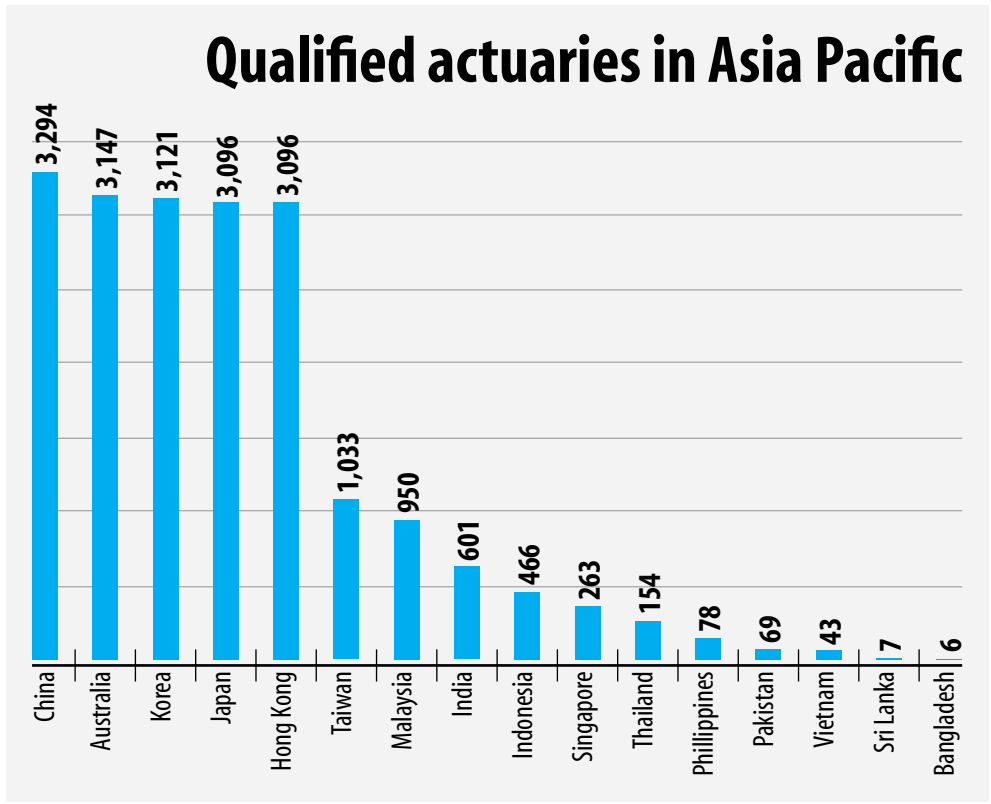
Rallis also touched upon the challenges facing Bangladesh’s insurance sector.

In Bangladesh, the coverage of insurance is low when compared with global situation.

“The authorities should pay heed to bring more people under insurance coverage.”

As of December, around 2 crore people in Bangladesh have insurance coverage, according to data from the IDRA.

“Many educated people in Bangladesh have never heard the name of the profession. Even teachers are unaware of it, which is a barrier for the expansion of the profession,” he said, while urging local universities to introduce actuarial-related courses to make the profession popular.



the scholarship.

It is in talks with the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA) to promote the actuarial profession, said Rallis, who is also the chief of the US-based Society of Actuaries, the largest professional body for actuaries.

It provides professional certification to individuals upon completion of necessary courses.

“This is an old profession. I have recently visited Japan as a guest speaker to mark the 120-year anniversary of the profession in the country,” he said.

MetLife, which is a 150-year old insurer, appointed actuaries from its inception.

It started its journey in Bangladesh in 1952 as Alico until its acquisition by MetLife Inc globally in November 2010, when it was co-branded as MetLife Alico. In 2015 it was renamed MetLife.

It serves more than a million customers and is a major employer in Bangladesh: MetLife has more than 16,000 field forces and employees.

There are 33 life insurance and 46 non-

life insurance companies in Bangladesh. But the profession is quite new in Bangladesh, which is why there are only six actuaries in the country.

There are about 500 actuaries in India, more than 100 in Pakistan and about 30 in Sri Lanka. Globally, there are 75,000 actuaries.

Three out of the six actuaries in Bangladesh are working at MetLife, which has a strong presence in 40 countries.

“Bangladesh should widen the profession as a majority of the insurance companies have no dedicated actuary to set premium and reserves for clients and entities,” said Rallis, who earned a Bachelors of Science in both Physics and in Mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The number of actuary depends on the volume of a country’s insurance industry.

Actuary is the core theme to develop the insurance sector because everything is dependent on data. Analysing data and statistics is an essential part for insurance

Importers to be fined for delayed bills of entry submission

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) plans to make it mandatory for businesses to submit import declarations within 72 hours of arrival of goods at the port to ease container congestion.

Known as bill of entry, there are instances that importers do not submit the documents for days to the customs authority to clear goods from ports, which causes huge congestion.

“We will incorporate a provision of penalty in the law for non-submission of bills of entry within 72 hours of arrival of goods,” said Khondaker Muhammad Aminur Rahman, a member of NBR for customs audit, modernisation and international trade.

The disclosure came at an event on ease of doing business in the office of the Economic Reporters’ Forum (ERF) in Dhaka. The ERF, the NBR and International Finance Corporation (IFC) jointly organised the programme.

The government is working to implement the National Single Window (NSW) project to provide services to businesses by bringing

39 agencies under a single roof to speed up the process of international trade, Rahman said.

There would be significant improvement in the process of doing business once the NSW project is implemented, he said, adding that it would take one to two days to clear imported items from port.

To facilitate faster trade, the NBR also plans to limit physical examination of import-export consignment to less than 3 to 5 per cent, according to Rahman.

The revenue authority is also working to install an increased number of scanners at ports and establish a central testing laboratory of its own.

“It is possible to do duty assessment if we get bill of entry in time,” said Md Anwar Hossain, commissioner of Kamalapur Inland Container Depot in Dhaka.

Among others, Commissioners of Dhaka Customs House Md Moazzem Hossain, Customs Bond Commissionerate (Dhaka) SM Humayun Kabir and IFC’s Private Sector Specialist Nusrat Nahid Babi and First Secretary of Customs Modernisation of NBR AAM Amimul Ehsan Khan spoke.

‘Exciting time for increasing already-strong US-Bangladesh trade and investment ties’

Says top American diplomat

STAR BUSINESS REPORT


The 27th edition of the three-day US Trade Show will kick off in the capital tomorrow with hopes of further deepening trade and investment ties between the two countries.

“The show is an important symbol of the strong and continuous US commitment to this market, and to Bangladesh,” said said JoAnne Wagner, charg   d’affaires of the US embassy in Dhaka, at the press briefing held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon in the capital yesterday.

The event is an opportunity to showcase the high-quality products and services the US companies have and recognise the contribution of American companies on Bangladesh’s economy. In Bangladesh, some 23 American companies have invested with 100 per cent equity while 95 others have formed joint ventures.

The show -- jointly organised by the US embassy in Dhaka and the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) -- will fuel Bangladesh’s economic growth.

America is the single largest export destination for Bangladesh and the US is the largest foreign investor for the south Asian country. Bangladesh exported goods worth \$6.7 million to the US in 2019 and received a total of \$3.54 billion of foreign direct

US-Bangladesh Trade and investments at a glance	
	
Total exhibitors	48
Total companies	120
US-Bangladesh trade	\$9.01b
Bangladesh’s export	\$6.7b
US’s export	\$2.3b
FDI from the US	\$3.54b
Equity firms	23
Joint venture	95

investment from so far.

At a time when garment exports are falling, shipments to the US actually increased by almost 10 per cent last year, she said, adding that the US accounted for about 17 per cent of Bangladesh’s total exports.

“We believe there is room for more.”

The 2020 US Trade Show, which will take place at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon, will exhibit more than 120 US brands, represented by 48 exhibitors from US and local representatives, said Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of AmCham.

The participating US firms include Metlife, Burger King, Best Western International, MasterCard, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Cisco, Visa, US Food Mart, Yum! Restaurants International.

American companies like Metlife Alico and other big investors are helping Bangladesh to develop the economy, Wagner said.

“US firms bring some of the best, most innovative technologies to Bangladesh,” she said, while citing a few examples.

Excelerate Energy used state-of-the-art technology to build Bangladesh’s first liquefied natural gas terminal in 2018. The terminal provides clean energy, makes power supplies more reliable and promotes industrial development throughout the country.

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