



Emranul Huq, acting managing director of Dhaka Bank, and Khondaker Sabbir Mohd Kabir, director for accounts and audit at American International University-Bangladesh, exchange signed documents on the university's campus in Dhaka recently facilitating tuition fee payments at the bank's branches.

# China should fine-tune monetary policy based on growth: top panel

REUTERS, Beijing

China should fine-tune monetary policy in a pre-emptive way based on economic growth and price changes, the official Xinhua News Agency said on Monday, citing a top-level meeting chaired by President Xi Jinping.

"Monetary policy needs to be neither too tight, nor too loose and should be fine-tuned in a timely and pre-emptive way based on economic growth and changes in price situations," Xinhua quoted the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission as saying.

The report was the fourth from a top-ranking policymaking body in China in less than two weeks, and comes as financial markets debate how much more additional support Beijing will provide to the world's second-largest economy after surprisingly resilient data released last week.

The economy expanded at a steady 6.4 percent pace in the first quarter, defying expectations for a further slowdown, with industrial output, retail sales and investment in March all growing faster than expected following a raft of growth-boosting measures rolled out in recent months.

China's growth last year cooled



A man checks phone at Lujiazui financial district in Shanghai, China.

to a near 30-year low of 6.6 percent, weighed down by weak investment and the escalating trade war with the United States.

The Xinhua report on Monday did not give more details on the reference to watching price changes. Producer and consumer price gauges in China have picked up, easing concerns about deflationary risks, but broader inflation levels are still modest.

The policy comments from the financial commission meeting largely echoed those from meetings of China's Politburo, the State

Council and the central bank in the past two weeks.

A statement on Friday from the Politburo, a top decision-making body of the Communist Party, said China will maintain policy support for the economy, which still faces "downward pressure" and difficulties despite better-than-expected first quarter growth.

It said authorities will strike a balance between stabilising economic growth, promoting reforms, controlling risks and improving people's livelihoods, adding that China would forward with structural

efforts to control debt levels and prevent speculation in the property market, it said.

Chinese stock markets fell sharply on Monday as investors feared the government will temper the pace of further policy easing if the economy continues to improve. China's major stock indexes have surged around 30 percent so far this year on expectations stimulus will stabilise the economy.

While analysts cautioned it was too early to call a turnaround, some market watchers bumped up their China growth forecasts after last week's data and lowered their expectations of further support measures.

Monday's comments from the financial commission also reiterated that China will step up fiscal policy and strengthen macro counter-cyclical adjustments, a phrase that usually refers to efforts to reduce pressure on the economy.

In March, the government announced billions of dollars in additional tax cuts and infrastructure spending to help businesses and protect jobs.

Regulators are likely to keep up efforts to keep credit available to smaller firms at more affordable rates, though there are concerns that a recent surge in bank lending could fuel another jump in bad loans and speculation in property markets.

## Samsung Electronics delays Galaxy Fold media events in China

REUTERS, Seoul

Smartphone maker Samsung Electronics Co Ltd has postponed media events for its Galaxy Fold planned for this week in Hong Kong and Shanghai, a company official said, days after reviewers of the foldable handset reported defective samples.

The official did not elaborate on reasons or rescheduling.

Instead of plaudits ahead of the phone's launch on April 26 in the United States, the South Korean conglomerate has been blighted by technology journalists reporting breaks, bulges and blinking screens after using their samples for as little as a day.

Samsung said it received "a few" reports of damage to the displays of samples of the

\$1,980 handset, raising the specter of the combustible Galaxy Note 7 three years ago which the firm ultimately pulled from shelves at massive cost.

The reviewers' reports of broken screens went viral online and prompted the creation of hashtag #foldgate on Twitter.

Samsung has hailed the folding design as the future in a field that has seen few surprises since Apple Inc's iPhone in 2007. Chinese rival Huawei Technologies Co Ltd has also announced a folding handset, the Mate X.

The Samsung official on Monday said the firm was thoroughly investigating the damage reports as previously announced, and declined to comment on whether there would be any change to the US release date.

## Huawei launches 'world's first' 5G communications hardware for autos

REUTERS, Beijing

China's Huawei Technologies launched on Monday what it said was the world's first 5G communications hardware for the automotive industry, in a sign of its growing ambitions to become a key supplier to the sector for self-driving technology.

Huawei said in a statement that the so-called MH5000 module is based on the Balong 5000 5G chip which it launched in January. "Based on this chip, Huawei has developed the world's first 5G car module with high speed and high quality," it said.

It launched the module at the Shanghai Autoshow, which began last week and runs until Thursday.

"As an important communication product for future intelligent car transportation, this 5G car module will promote the auto-

motive industry to move towards the 5G era," Huawei said.

It said the module will aid its plans to start commercialising 5G network technology for the automotive sector in the second half of this year.

Huawei has in recent years been testing technology for intelligent connected cars in Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Shenzhen and Wuxi and has signed cooperation deals with a swathe of car makers including FAW, Dongfeng and Changan.

The company, which is also the world's biggest telecoms equipment maker, is striving to lead the global race for next-generation 5G networks but has come under increasing scrutiny from Washington which alleges that its equipment could be used for espionage. Huawei has repeatedly denied the allegations.



Md Abdus Salam Azad, CEO of Janata Bank, attends its branch managers' conference in the capital on Saturday.

## Saudi, UAE pledge \$3b financial aid for Sudan

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on Sunday announced three billion dollars (2.7 billion euros) in financial support for Sudan following the overthrow of longtime leader Omar al-Bashir.

The oil-rich Gulf states pledged to inject \$500 million into the Sudanese central bank and \$2.5 billion to help provide food, medicine and petroleum products, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

It did not specify if the money is a gift or a loan.

The deposit for the central bank is aimed at shoring up the Sudanese pound, the SPA said.

In recent years Sudan has been hit by an acute lack of dollars, a key factor behind the nationwide protests that led to the toppling of Bashir by the army this month.

After weeks of silence on Sudan's political turmoil, Saudi Arabia and the UAE called for "stability" and a "peaceful transition" in the days following Bashir's ouster.

Sudan plays a key role in the regional interests of Saudi Arabia and its allies, siding

with Riyadh against Shiite Iran and providing troops in the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen's war.

Both Gulf nations have voiced backing for Sudan's military rulers, who are facing calls from protesters to cede power to a civilian transitional government.

Since Bashir's ouster the Sudanese pound has steadily strengthened on the black market, and on Sunday it jumped to 45 per dollar, after trading at 72 at one stage last week.

The official exchange rate is 47.5 pounds to the dollar.

Earlier media reports that Saudi Arabia was expected to send aid to Sudan were seen as a factor boosting the pound.

The Sudanese currency had plunged even after the United States lifted its 20-year-old trade embargo on the country in October 2017.

Expectations that the end of US sanctions would bring an economic recovery failed to materialise, putting pressure on the pound.

The country's economic crisis has deepened since the secession of South Sudan in 2011 that took away the bulk of oil earnings.

## US prepares to end Iran oil waivers; Asian buyers to be hardest hit

REUTERS, Washington

The United States on Monday said it will eliminate in May all waivers granted to eight economies allowing them to buy Iranian oil without facing US sanctions, as it ratcheted up pressure to choke off all oil revenues of the Islamic Republic.

The decision, taken by President Donald Trump, has sent oil prices to their highest in 2019, even though the White House said the United States was working with top Opec exporter Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to ensure the oil market is "adequately supplied."

The sanctions were imposed as Washington pressed Iran to curtail its nuclear program and stop backing militant proxies across the Middle East.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday reiterated that Washington's goal was to bring down exports of Iranian oil to zero and added the United States had no plans to give any grace period beyond May 1 for coun-

tries to comply.

"Today I am announcing that we will no longer grant any exemptions," Pompeo said in a briefing. "We are going to zero. We're going to zero across the board."

Oil prices spiked after Sunday reports that the waivers would end and remained higher on Monday. International benchmark Brent rose 2.6 percent to \$73.87 a barrel after earlier touching \$74.31, highest since early November. US crude futures gained 2.4 percent, or \$1.52 a barrel, to \$65.52.

It earlier touched a high of \$65.87, a level not seen since late October. The United States reimposed sanctions in November on exports of Iranian oil after Trump unilaterally pulled out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers last May. Trump had frequently criticized the accord, reached under predecessor Barack Obama, as "the worst deal ever."

Along with sanctions,

Washington granted waivers to eight economies that had reduced their purchases of Iranian oil, allowing them to continue buying it without incurring sanctions for six more months. They were China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece.

The United States had been deliberating over the past couple of months whether or not to renew some of the waivers while avoiding a spike in oil and fuel prices that could hurt US consumers.

Iran's exports have fallen to less than 1 million barrels per day from more than 2.5 million bpd before sanctions were re-imposed a year ago.

In recent months, Saudi Arabia and other Opec members have cut supply dramatically. While the kingdom is expected to boost output again, analysts fear that the US move - along with sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry - will leave the world with inadequate spare capacity.

## Slumping Kraft Heinz names new chief executive

AFP, New York

US food giant Kraft Heinz announced Monday it will replace its chief executive as it tries to pivot from recent setbacks, including a giant asset write-down and regulatory probes.

The company said Miguel Patricio, who has been chief marketing officer at beer giant AB InBev, will become the chief executive at Kraft Heinz on July 1.

He will replace Bernardo Hees, who has led the company since the 2015 merger combining the ketchup maker with the company behind Jell-O and Philadelphia Cream Cheese.

Hees is also a partner at the Brazilian investment firm 3G Capital, which collaborated with Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway on the Kraft takeover.

## China's economic powerhouse Guangdong posts steady Q1 growth

REUTERS, Beijing

Guangdong, China's top province by economic output, maintained a growth rate of 6.6 percent in the first quarter thanks to improving industrial production and infrastructure spending, the 21st Century Business Herald reported, citing local officials.

That came in a notch above the Guangdong provincial government's target of 6.0 percent to 6.5 percent this year and unchanged from growth in the fourth quarter of last year.

Export-oriented Guangdong, whose gross domestic product of about \$1.4 trillion is equivalent to that of Australia, has been battling intense pressure from a nine-month

long trade war between the United States and China, with many businesses in the region shifting production out of China as factory orders dried up.

Exports have yet to show any sustainable improvement, up just 1.8 percent in the first three months, according to the Herald. That was slightly faster than the 1.2 percent growth in 2018 but still pointed to sluggish global demand.

To keep foreign customers, Chinese manufacturers have been giving discounts and scaling back workforces, among other measures.

In line with the national trend, Guangdong's industrial production raced to a nine-month high in the first

quarter, with output of new energy vehicles rising 252.1 percent from a year earlier.

Some analysts had attributed the jump to manufacturers building inventory to take advantage of Beijing's announcement of value-added tax cuts that went into effect on April 1.

Production in telecommunication base stations in Guangdong surged 154 percent, likely due to the government's push to launch 5G services across the region. Guangdong is targeting to build 7,300 5G towers by 2020.

Output in advanced manufacturing, accounting for over half of total industrial output, rose 6.9 percent in first quarter, while that in high-tech manufacturing surged 9.6 percent.



Najith Meewanage, chief operating officer of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC, and Morshed Alam, executive director of Heritage Hotel in Cox's Bazar, exchange the papers of a memorandum of understanding at the bank's corporate office in Dhaka recently. The bank's cardholders will get privileged services at the hotel.