



Yeafesh Osman, science and technology minister; Mustafa Jabbar, ICT minister, and Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister, attend a view-exchange meeting organised by a2i Innovation Lab at the National Museum of Science and Technology in Dhaka on Sunday on internationally recognised local innovations.

## Uber slides at open following last week's rocky debut

AFP, New York

Uber shares went into a fresh skid Monday -- more bad news for the global ride-hailing giant, which endured steep declines in its hotly anticipated market debut last week. Shares in Uber were off six percent at \$38.95 after 15 minutes after slipping as much as 10 percent in the second day of trade on the New York Stock Exchange. Valued at some \$82 billion in one of the biggest initial public offerings (IPOs) in the technology sector, Uber's debut Friday was a major disappointment, losing 7.6 percent. Richard Windsor, an analyst who writes

the Radio Free Mobile blog on technology, said Uber and Lyft have been pressured by their high valuations and intense competition. Uber and Lyft "are currently engaged in a life or death struggle to become the dominant ridesharing platform in the USA," Windsor said. "It is this reality combined with the very high valuations at which they have been listed that is putting the pressure on these companies." Lyft shares fell three percent to \$49.30 and have given back some 30 percent since the company's market debut in late March.

## Indian mills to export 3m tonnes of sugar

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian sugar mills have contracted to export 3 million tonnes of sugar since the current marketing season began on Oct. 1, a leading trade body said on Monday. Mills have already shipped out 2.1 million tonnes of the sweetener, Praful Vithalani, president of the All India Sugar Trade Association, told Reuters. Mills have exported almost an equal amount of raw and white sugar for which the top four destinations are Bangladesh, Iran, Sri Lanka and Somalia, Vithalani said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet late last year approved incentives to encourage money-losing mills to export at least 5 million tonnes of sugar in the 2018/19 season to help prop up local prices by trimming bulging stocks.

## China auto sales slump continues in April

AFP, Shanghai

China car sales fell 14.6 percent in April, an official industry association said on Monday, extending a slump in a massive auto market that has long been a cash cow for the industry. Sales fell to 1.98 million last month, according to figures from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM). Fueled by rising incomes and government sales incentives, China in recent years has surged to become the world's largest automotive market and one of its fastest growing, prompting global manufacturers to stake their

futures on it.

But after years of strong growth, car sales fell last year for the first time since the 1990s, hit by a slowing domestic economy, trade tensions with the United States, and a Chinese crackdown on shady credit practices that have crimped car-financing channels. Sales had dipped 2.8 percent in 2018 to 28.1 million units, according to previous CAAM figures, and the decline has accelerated into 2019. Analyst say the ongoing slump has been heightened by a surge in sales in recent years as consumers rushed to buy cars ahead of the recent removal of tax rebates for small-vehicle purchases.

"At present, the main reason for the market downturn is a lack of consumer confidence," CAAM said. Factors contributing to the April decline also included the recent implementation of tighter emissions standards in some provinces, which have impacted manufacturers, the association said, without giving details. The persistent slowdown has pushed major manufacturers to cut prices and announce plans to pursue more design changes and automotive options tailored specifically to Chinese consumers. The state-run association said car-buyers were in a "wait-and-see" mode, but it sounded a positive note for the

future, saying that recent income tax cuts and other government policies aimed at spurring consumption should kick in soon. "We are full of confidence in the stable development of the automotive market throughout the year," it said. Major carmakers have stressed that they continue to see solid potential in China's market, particularly in bright spots such as SUVs and electric vehicles. But competition is expected to intensify even in EVs with Beijing moving to phase out policies that encourage the purchase of "green" vehicles. CAAM said 97,000 "new energy" vehicles were sold in April, up 18.1 percent year-on-year.

## Afghan refugee entrepreneurs thrive in Turkey

AFP, Beylikdüzü, Turkey

When Afghan businessman Haji Yakup Burhan fled the violence of his home country 30 years ago, he brought with him his family -- and all his money. He headed to Saudi Arabia, where he opened a restaurant but, as refugees, his children had difficulty getting into a school. Then he moved to the United Arab Emirates, but Dubai's costs seemed impossible. So, two years ago, he moved to Turkey and opened a restaurant in Istanbul's Esenyurt neighbourhood, taking advantage of the country's relatively open business environment for refugees. "I have 15 people working for me in this restaurant. They are Afghans, Iranians and Turks. "I have invested about \$120,000 (107,000 euros) in this restaurant so far," Burhan, 52, told AFP at his Afghan Kebab establishment. "Over 60 percent of our customers are Afghans living here. The rest are Arabs, Iranians and Turks," he said. Afghan refugee entrepreneurs appear to be increasingly finding success in Turkey, where they bring to the local economy, not only their savings, but sought-after know-how, whether in restaurants, commerce or skilled crafts and specialties. In turn, Turkey offers refugees simplified administrative procedures for setting up a new business. Turkey hosts nearly four million refugees, with Syrians making up the largest group, but Afghans number more than 145,000, according to Amnesty International figures released last year. Some people in Turkey view refugees as a burden, but a different picture emerges in

Burhan's bustling Istanbul suburb, where refugees like him have made significant investment in the Turkish economy. Inside Burhan's restaurant, a TV blares Afghan channels showing Turkish soap operas over the hum of customers eating the popular Afghan dish Qabeli Palaw -- rice with lamb meat and mixed with caramelised carrots, raisins and almond slivers. "We are the only Afghan restaurant in this neighbourhood for now," he told AFP, sitting cross-legged on a mattress, sipping green tea. To attract more investment at a time when the Turkish economy was struggling last year, the government in September slashed from \$1 million to \$250,000 the threshold at which Turkish citizenship is offered to foreigners buying property. It sparked an 82-percent increase in foreigners buying real estate in the first quarter of this year, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) said. Afghans likely account for a small percentage of this hike -- precise figures are unavailable -- but not all those fleeing the war-ravaged country are destitute. Mehmet Yasin Hamidi, an Afghan who runs the Royalist real-estate agency in Beylikdüzü, on Istanbul's outskirts, told AFP that their sales of homes had doubled this year compared to the same period last year. "People cannot protect their lives and money in Afghanistan," Hamidi, who has lots of Afghans among his clients, said. "If you have money, you or your children could get kidnapped. The businessmen are threatened there. That is why they bring their money here."



Ian Steff, assistant secretary for global markets at the US Department of Commerce, calls on Salman F Rahman, private industry and investment adviser to the prime minister, at the latter's office in the capital's Gulshan yesterday. Earl R Miller, US ambassador to Bangladesh, was present.

## Turkey to tap 40b lira from central bank reserves

REUTERS, Ankara

Turkey's Treasury ministry is working on legislation to transfer the central bank's 40 billion lira (\$6.6 billion) in legal reserves to the government's budget to shore it up, three economic officials told Reuters. The budget is deeper in deficit than expected, said the sources, who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly. It was unclear when or whether the draft law would reach parliament, however, though one of the sources said it would happen "soon." Turkey's economy tipped into recession last year after the lira fell sharply. The currency is under pressure again, in part due to worries over the central bank's depleted foreign exchange reserves, which would help it defend against another crisis. Separate to foreign exchange reserves, "legal reserves" are what the central bank sets aside from profits by law to be used in extraordinary circumstances. At end-2018, they stood at 27.6 billion lira, according to the bank's balance sheet data. A second source with knowledge of the matter said last year's "legal reserves" combined with this year's amounted to the 40-billion lira figure, which was cited by all three people who spoke to Reuters.

## Biman resumes Dhaka-Delhi flights after four years

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Biman has announced a 15 percent discount on the ticket fare till May 30. The fare for an economy class return ticket having one-month's validity has been fixed \$300 and that with one year's validity at \$320, excluding taxes. Biman suspended flight operations on Dhaka-Delhi and Dhaka-Hong Kong routes in March 2015 on diverting three wide-body aircraft for Hajj operations that year. The national carrier resumed twice-weekly service on each of the routes in May 2014, a year past suspending operations on these two long-served destinations in 2012 due to a severe shortage of aircraft.

## Toshiba net profit up on chip business sale

AFP, Tokyo

Struggling Japanese engineering firm Toshiba on Monday reported improved full-year net profit thanks to the sale of its chip business, but said operating profit was sharply down. In the year that ended March, Toshiba's net profit jumped 26.0 percent to 1.01 trillion yen (\$9 billion), chiefly because of "profit from completion of the sale of the Memory business," it said in a statement. Toshiba "achieved a healthier financial condition by closing the sale of the Memory business, advancing structural reforms that included finalising the sale of the PC business and decided to withdraw from a nuclear power construction project in the

UK," the company said. But the firm said its operating profit dropped 58.9 percent to 35.4 billion yen, partly due to restructuring costs, on sales of 3.69 trillion yen, down 6.4 percent. For the current year to March 2020, it forecast a jump of 295 percent in operating profit to 140 billion yen, after the completion of restructuring and other projects, on sales of 3.4 trillion yen. It did not provide net profit forecast, saying it did not have sufficient information on the chip business -- which remains an affiliate. The Tokyo-based company used to sell everything from rice cookers to nuclear plants and has long been a household name.

## Bank graft biggest risk to economy

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In comparison, the net inflow of the FDI in 2018 increased by 67.91 percent to \$3.61 billion from \$2.15 billion in the previous year. "The amount is still very low in terms of the country's development needs. It is also low compared to the FDI inflow to many countries at a similar level of development," the review said. Overall, trade deficit narrowed by 8.43 percent in July-February of FY19, thanks to a steady growth of exports and a slowdown in imports. The deficit in trade in services, too, shrank year-on-year by 0.94 percent in the same period. Lower trade and service deficit led to a significant improvement in

the current account balance during July-February of FY19. The current account deficit narrowed to \$4.27 billion during the period under review from \$5.899 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. The financial account surplus has, however, shrunk by 30.75 percent from \$5.376 billion to \$3.723 billion during this period, despite an increasing trend in the net FDI. Due to a significant improvement in the current account balance, the deficit in the overall balance improved to \$499 million in July-February of FY19 from a deficit of \$978 million during the corresponding months of FY18.

## Committee to meet again to fix deadline

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The state minister urged factory owners to allow Eid vacation in phases so that workers can leave their workstations smoothly by avoiding massive traffic jam before the Eid. The production in the garment sector should not be hampered owing to the vacation, she said. The ministry holds such meeting with the stakeholders to avoid any untoward incidents ahead of Eid as many garment factories can not pay the workers on time. This prompts workers to take to the streets to realise unpaid wages and festival allowances.



Najith Meewanage, chief operating officer of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC, and Md Esam Ebne Yousuf Siddique, chief administrative officer of Sqaure Hospitals, attend a deal signing ceremony at the latter's office in Dhaka recently offering equal monthly instalment facility at zero interest to the bank's cardholders.

Advertorial

The Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh (NCCI), in cooperation with the Nordic Embassies organized a seminar, "Sustainability Today, Better Future Tomorrow" The Honorable Minister from the Ministry of Industry, Md. Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, MP was the chief guest. He stated that many factories in Bangladesh are implementing and exemplifying a number of best practices to improve their efficiency and sustainability such as rain water harvesting, use of water efficient dyes, chemicals and use of renewable energy among many others.

COMMERCIAL BANK OF CEYLON