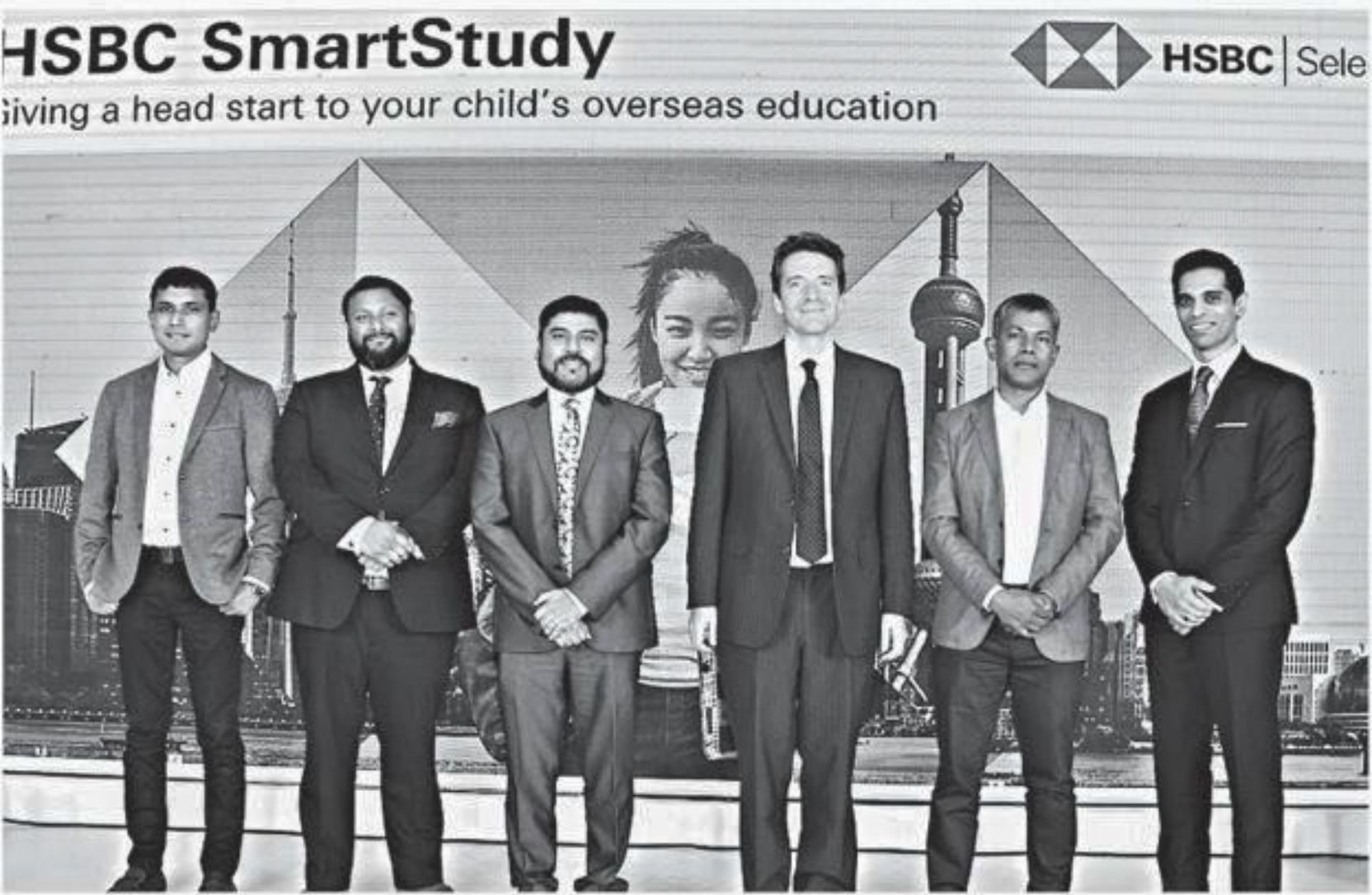


HSBC offers overseas study support

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Bangladesh has recently launched "HSBC SmartStudy", a new comprehensive proposition to support students in their overseas education journey from start till the end.

executive officer of HSBC Bangladesh, attended the launch at Westin Dhaka. HSBC Bangladesh will also assist students in opening an overseas account prior to their departure to their education destination for the first time, the bank said in a statement yesterday. The "HSBC SmartStudy" services include local account



Francois de Maricourt, CEO of HSBC Bangladesh, attends the launch of the bank's new service, SmartStudy, at Westin Dhaka recently.

"HSBC Select" customers will now be able to open a "Student File" account and facilitate payments through HSBC Bangladesh to top education destinations.

opening with "HSBC Select" for new customers, access to in-depth fact files on prime overseas education markets and ATM/debit card for overseas account prior to departure.

Francois de Maricourt, chief

It also has priority consultancy

services through selective overseas education consultants and hassle-free loans secured by existing HSBC relationships.

"At HSBC, we recognise that education is key to human development and prosperity. In today's globalised world, an international university education helps provide greater exposure to newer experiences, ideas and cultures," said Maricourt.

"With the support of our international network, we want to help our clients ease their overseas education process in their journey to fulfil their hopes and realise their ambitions," he said.

Ahmed Saiful Islam, country head of retail banking and wealth management at HSBC Bangladesh, said, "Every year approximately 60,000 students go overseas from Bangladesh for higher studies."

"With SmartStudy, we want to support parents and students with end-to-end professional assistance to help them better prepare themselves by leveraging on HSBC's unparalleled international connectivity," he said.

Anindya Chowdhury, director and CEO of Mentors Study Abroad; Rouham Manzoor, managing partner of MACES; Ahmed Saiful Islam, country head of retail banking and wealth management at HSBC Bangladesh; Syed Mohammad Ismail, country manager at ArchRoma, and Ali Reza, head of customer value management at HSBC Bangladesh, were present.

China eyes front against protectionism at G20

AFP, Beijing

China said Monday it would seek backing for free trade and multilateralism at the G20 summit this week as it denounced protectionism while it fights a tariffs war with the United States.

A meeting between Xi Jinping and his Donald Trump on the sidelines of the gathering in Osaka, Japan has fuelled hopes for a truce in the increasingly damaging standoff between the world's top two economies.

"Unilateralism and protectionism has damaged global growth... undermined global value chains and dampened market sentiment," Zhang Jun, the Chinese assistant minister of foreign affairs, said at a briefing to preview Xi's attendance at the summit.

"China will work with others at the G20 to firmly uphold multilateralism and an open, rule-based global trading order," Zhang said.

But Japan, the European Union and other trading partners have in the past echoed US complaints about the alleged theft of intellectual property and lack of a level playing field for foreign investors in China.

Any attempts to build a united front with China will be tempered by these concerns.

Negotiations to resolve the trade war stalled last month resulting in both sides exchanging steep tariffs on hundreds of billions in exports.

Chinese vice minister for commerce Wang Shouwen said teams from both sides are now "discussing the next step for communication" ahead of the Xi

Trump meeting.

The two should make compromises and any talks between China and the US have to be based on "mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit and comply with WTO rules", Wang said.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss the fate of Chinese tech giant

companies.

The planned meeting comes a week after Xi visited nuclear-armed North Korea, and analysts said any influence he may have on Pyongyang's isolated leader could be used as leverage to win concessions from Trump.



Chinese Vice Commerce Minister and Deputy China International Trade Representative Wang Shouwen attends a news conference during a session of the National People's Congress in Beijing.

Huawei, which has suffered a heavy blow after the Trump administration banned US firms from working with it, citing espionage fears.

Wang urged the US to remove "inappropriate and discriminatory" barriers against Chinese companies, saying such moves jeopardise the interests of both Chinese and US

Zhang declined to confirm whether North Korea will be on the agenda for the Trump-Xi head-to-head, saying they were still "finalising the details".

He also said China will "not allow" a discussion on Hong Kong at the G20 even as Washington said Trump plans to raise the city's mass protests in his meeting with Xi.

Revised tax target to fall short by big margin

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The think-tank forecasted the revenue shortfall come the year's end would be about Tk 85,000 crore.

This would be the seventh year since fiscal 2012-13 that the government will miss its revenue collection target.

In fiscal 2017-18, collections missed the target of Tk 225,000 crore by Tk 22,686 crore, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said on Sunday.

The latest collection figure quoted by him though differs by Tk 15,211 crore from the one put in the budget documents by the finance ministry on June 13: the NBR's total collection was shown to be Tk 187,103 crore in fiscal 2017-18.

The discrepancy has given rise to questions of data engineering by the government.

Officials of finance division said the data gap takes place every year as the finance division collects data from the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh, where there is a data gap with the NBR.

The CPD in its analysis on the budget for fiscal 2019-20 also raised the issue of discrepancy in tax collection data between the NBR and finance ministry.

The NBR's collection figures are always higher than the ones shown by the finance ministry. "NBR data is used in the budget speech to report the revenue growth trend. Is it to show a better picture?"

"Data discrepancy constantly becomes a problem for us," said Fahmida Khatun, research director of the CPD, at a dialogue on the budget on Sunday held at the capital's Lakeshore Hotel.



Jaafar Ali Al-Sarraf, general manager at Gulf Exchange Company, Qatar, and Anis A Khan, CEO of Mutual Trust Bank, exchange documents of a deal signed at the bank's corporate head office in Dhaka recently facilitating fund transfers.

Trade licence renewal tax to shoot up six times

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The increase in tax on renewal of trade licence will be a further discouragement for them.

Citing the National Economic Census 2013 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, he said there were about 8 million active economic units in the country and less than 35 percent of them have trade licences.

On paper, the fee for a trade licence under Dhaka North City Corporation is Tk 3,000. But in reality, an individual has to cough up Tk 8,000-Tk 10,000 for a licence or renewal as there are informal payments to be made.

"A hike in the renewal tax will be costly for small businesses."

Small-scale women entrepreneurs are especially struggling to get licences as they do not usually own properties in their name.

"The proposed tax increase will make things harder for them," Rahman added.

Introduced in 2007, the NBR first raised the tax on trade licence renewal in 2012. This will be the second time that the tax administration is seeking a hike.

The tax has been increased based on recommendations from some trade bodies with a view to discouraging seasonal traders, said an official of the NBR.

"We have been told that there are people who get licences to run business for a short

time and pack their bags and leave without any notice," he said, adding that there would be no impact on traders as the tax is adjustable to the total tax payable.

If anyone makes a net profit of Tk 250,000 in Dhaka city, he/she will have to pay Tk 5,000 in tax. The individual will pay Tk 3,000 in advance and the rest at the end of a year.

"Any additional tax to be paid is refundable," the tax official said.

Yet, Imran Ahmed, vice-president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), said the measure would drive up the cost of businesses.

"Obviously, this will not yield any good result for us. Our cost is rising in other areas too, but our profit margin is not increasing."

Some 70 percent the DCCI members are small and medium enterprises and the majority of them do business based on trade licences, he added.

"The NBR could have increased the tax gradually instead of raising it sharply in one go," said Abul Hashem, vice-president of the Bangladesh Sugar Merchants Association.

The NBR should ensure that the operators of small businesses get the refund without any hassle, said Md Helal Uddin, president of the Bangladesh Shop Owners Association.

US explores requiring domestic 5G equipment to be made outside China

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump is looking to require next-generation 5G cellular equipment used in the United States to be designed and manufactured outside China, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday, citing people familiar with the matter.

As part of a 150-day review that started after cybersecurity concerns in the United States, officials are asking telecom equipment makers if they can develop US-bound hardware including cellular-tower electronics as well as routers and switches, and software outside of China, the WSJ reported.

In May, the Trump administration took aim at China's Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, banning the firm from buying vital US technology without special approval and effectively barring its equipment from US telecom networks on national security grounds.

Career fair begins Thursday

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Other sessions will help potential employees acquire skills, in addition to academic knowledge, sought by recruiters.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen is scheduled to inaugurate the fair as chief guest, while Zahid Ahsan Russel, state minister for youth and sports, will be present as special guest.

Sheikh Fazle Fahim, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, will present a keynote paper titled "Youth Powerhouse: The key to be a developed nation" at the opening session.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, will attend the closing ceremony as chief guest. Md Foyzul Islam, registrar of Brac University, and Mahbube Elahi Chowdhury, CEO of NRB Jobs BD, also spoke.

Bitcoin tests 15-month highs after 10pc weekend jump

REUTERS, London

Bitcoin tested 15-month highs on Monday after jumping more than 10 percent over the weekend, with analysts ascribing the spike to growing optimism over the adoption of cryptocurrencies after Facebook unveiled its Libra digital coin.

The biggest cryptocurrency hit \$11,247.62 on the Bitstamp exchange late on Sunday, its highest since March last year. It later pulled back, and was last up 0.7 percent at \$10,917.

Facebook said last week it planned to launch a new cryptocurrency called Libra, though the announcement immediately led to questions from regulators and politicians across the world.

Mati Greenspan, an analyst at eToro, said bitcoin's gains underscored growing optimism among retail investors that Facebook's plans were part of a wider trend of major companies adopting cryptocurrencies.

"Traders are speculating on future involvement of large players like Facebook," he said. "They believe that Libra will create mass awareness of cryptocurrencies and act as a gateway to adoption."

Other traders cited geopolitical factors from tensions in the Gulf region to the US-China trade war as fuelling interest in bitcoin, which has more than doubled in price since March.

Some investors have looked to bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies as a hedge against possible declines in domestic currencies, traders said.

Cryptocurrency markets are opaque, and it is difficult to pinpoint exact catalysts for price moves. Between 2200 GMT Friday and 0300 GMT Saturday alone, bitcoin rose more than 10 percent.

Thomas Puech of Enigma Securities, a London-based firm that specializes in larger size over-the-counter cryptocurrency deals, said growing tensions between the United States and Iran were "gas" for bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies.

In late March, bitcoin broke out of a spell of limited price moves. It has since risen more than 160 percent, an ascent peppered by double-digit price swings that have reminded some of its retail investor-fueled 2017 bubble.

Bitcoin's volatility has been a boon to larger investors such as hedge funds, and other investors searching for returns as central banks across the world lean towards lower interest rates, said Puech.

Gold prices hovered near a six-year high on Monday, with demand for the safe-haven metal boosted by dovish signals from major central banks.

Bitcoin, which accounts for over half of the cryptocurrency market, has more than trebled in price since touching its lowest this year in January.



Maj Gen Mohammad Humayun Kabir, vice chairman of Trust Bank, presides over the bank's 20th annual general meeting at Trust auditorium in Dhaka yesterday. The bank approved 10 percent stock dividend for 2018. Faruq Mainuddin, CEO, was present.

Cement to be 10pc costlier

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Kabir said the prices of a 50kg cement bag may increase to Tk 460 from Tk 420 on average.

The impact of the price hike of cement will affect the housing sector and the government's infrastructure projects.

"Ultimately, the industrial sector will be the loser," Kabir said.

The association demanded making the 5 percent AIT on imports and the 3 percent source tax on local supply adjustable and withdrawal of 5 percent AT on imports.

Kabir, also the chairman of GPH Ispat Ltd, said manufacturers don't want to increase the price of cement as the sector has been clocking 10 to 15 percent annual growth for the last 10 years, on the back of

the country's faster economic growth and the implementation of a number of mega projects.

He said if the tax measures remain unchanged, the growth of the sector will face big challenges and all development activities will slow down.

The market size of the cement sector is Tk 13,000 crore and the annual demand is 3.5 crore tonnes.

At present, 42 cement factories are active, with their combined installed manufacturing capacity standing at 5.5 crore tonnes. The investment in the sector is around Tk 30,000 crore.

Md Shahidullah, managing director of Metrocem Group, and Md Abdur Razzaque, general manager of Seven Rings Cement, were present at the briefing.