

# Innovate to attract new markets: industries minister



**Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun attends a conference of marketing professionals at the Teacher-Student Centre in the University of Dhaka on Friday.**

BANGLADESH MARKETERS' INSTITUTE

**STAR BUSINESS DESK**  
Businesses should focus on innovation in marketing to attract new avenues of trade while industries develop skilled human capital for sustainable growth, said Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun.  
There is no alternative to innovation to reach more consumers as behaviour patterns have been changing in line with transformations of global marketing trends, he said.  
"Businesses should empower their human capital upon the demand of the digital age focusing on soft skills

alongside product innovation to adopt the transformation of the market," said Humayun.  
He also urged academicians to improve relations between universities and industries for a smooth transition of graduates into careers.  
The minister was addressing a conference of marketing professionals at the Teacher-Student Centre of the University of Dhaka on Friday, says a statement from Bangladesh Marketers' Institute (BMI) yesterday.  
The BMI, a newly formed national platform for marketing professionals, academics and students, organised

the daylong event where academicians, professionals and graduates took part to celebrate "Marketing Day".  
The day becomes a big occasion to celebrate the excellence of marketing learners, said Mijanur Rahman, vice chancellor of Jagannath University.  
"It's a matter of joy that we have been able to organise the day for second consecutive term together with marketing departments of educational institutes and corporate offices. Hope, the celebration will strengthen the bonds among learners and practitioners," he said.

# Asia gold buying stalls as consumers look to cash in on price rally

REUTERS, Mumbai/Bengaluru

Physical gold buying stalled in top Asian hubs this week as consumers sold back bullion to cash in on a steep price rally, while a recent import duty hike further dented waning interest in an Indian market hit by a surge in local rates.

Global benchmark spot gold is on track to notch up a weekly gain and has risen about 10 percent this year.  
Refineries have been swamped with scrap metal with more customers selling back their gold, dealers said. "Demand is quite weak, especially with prices over \$1,400 an ounce," said Dick Poon, general manager at Heraeus Precious Metals in Hong Kong.  
In top consumer China, gold was sold at a premium of \$10-\$13 an ounce over the benchmark this week, versus last week's \$11-\$12 amid muted activity. The premiums might still not cover transportation and other costs, Poon added.

India also saw subdued demand for gold as a surprise hike in import duty to 12.5 percent from 10 percent last week pushed up prices to a record of 35,145 rupees per 10 grams on Thursday.  
"Retail buying has been weak since the start of the month. The duty hike further eroded retail purchases," said Harshad Ajmera, the proprietor of JJ Gold House, a wholesaler in the eastern city of Kolkata.  
Supplies are limited but the market is in discount due to weak demand, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a private gold importing bank.



**A salesperson attends to a customer (not pictured) inside a jewellery showroom in Mumbai.**

Dealers were offering a discount of up to \$20 an ounce over official domestic prices, down from \$30 last week, the highest since August 2016. The domestic price includes the 12.5 percent import tax and a 3 percent sales duty. Activity was lacklustre in Hong Kong as well, where gold was sold at anywhere from a discount of 30 cents to a \$1.20 premium, compared with premiums of \$0.50-\$1.20 last week.  
While customers are selling, there is still some interest from investors to bullion as a hedge against current geopolitical and economical uncertainties, said Joshua Rotbart, managing partner at J. Rotbart & Co in Hong Kong. In Singapore, premiums

of \$0.60-\$1 were charged, versus \$0.40-\$0.60 previously.  
"When prices dipped below \$1,400, we saw some clients coming in. But increasingly, more customers have been switching to (cheaper) silver," said Brian Lan, managing director at dealer GoldSilver Central in Singapore. The gap between gold and silver has widened almost without interruption since 2011.  
Preference for silver has been prevalent in South Korea, said Samson Li, a Hong Kong-based precious metals analyst with Refinitiv GFMS, saying several Chinese investors lost money when they bet on higher silver prices and lower gold rates.



**Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) President Jin Liqun pose during a meeting on the sidelines of the fourth annual meeting of the board of governors of the AIIB in Luxembourg yesterday. Story on B1**

MINISTRY OF FINANCE



**Ahmed Shaheen, deputy managing director and head of corporate banking at Eastern Bank, and Uzma Chowdhury, a director of Pran-RFL Group, sign a deal in Dhaka recently facilitating loans for the group's suppliers and dealers.**

EASTERN BANK

# AIIB pledges all-out support for Bangladesh

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Meanwhile on Friday, the AIIB approved a \$100-million loan to accelerate Bangladesh's efforts to deliver improved water supply and sanitation services to underserved communities.

The Bangladesh Municipal Water Supply and Sanitation Project will support government investments in water, sanitation and drainage infrastructure in 30 municipalities, where households continue to rely on public standpoints and shallow-tube wells. Once completed, about 600,000 people are expected to be connected to new piped water supply systems and benefit from improved sanitation services.

In particular, women and girls, often responsible for water collection, are expected to directly benefit from the project, said the Beijing-based multilateral lender in a statement.

Key components of the project also include capacity building at the national and local levels and project implementation and management support.

The \$209.53-million project is expected to be complete by April 2024. Of the total project cost, the World Bank is providing \$100 million and the government the remaining \$9.53 million.

The Bangladesh Municipal Water Supply and Sanitation Project is the fledgling lender's fifth investment in Bangladesh, taking its total commitment to the country thus far to \$505 million. Only neighbouring India has a higher number of projects approved by the AIIB: 10.

All the approved projects are aligned with the country's top priority development plans and the Sustainable Development Goals, the AIIB said in the statement.

Inaugurated in January 2016, the AIIB is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia.

# Non-state actors helping reach SDGs

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His presentation focused on tracking the changes in the priorities of civil society organisations (CSO) following the launch of the SDGs, identifying the CSO approaches and interventions in the area of "leave no one behind" and developing a framework for assessing contributions of the CSOs in delivering the SDGs.

The non-state actors in Bangladesh have been contributing in national development since the independence of the country, lawmaker Md Israfil Alam said as a panelist from Bangladesh.

The government is very willing to create more space and proper recognition of their contributions. He advised the non-state actors to focus more on actions than providing recommendations.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of the Citizen's Platform and distinguished fellow of CPD, chaired the dialogue.

He said there was a lack of clarity about the role of non-state actors not only among the policymakers but also among the community of non-state actors. At

the fourth year of the SDG journey, with the SDG Summit coming up, it is an opportunity to reflect upon the appreciation and adequacy of the role of non-state actors in delivering the SDGs, he said.

While speaking as a panelist, Minh-Thu Pham, executive director for policy at the United Nations Foundation, focused on the access of non-state actors to the policymakers and international stakeholders.

She suggested the non-state actors be more active in designing effective advocacy mechanisms towards influencing policies and adequate utilisation of their working space.

The dialogue was organised during the meeting of the United Nations HLPF 2019 which brought all global and national stakeholders of SDGs in New York.

The dialogue was participated by SDG experts and practitioners from various global and national development organisations.

Colleen Kelly, CEO, Concern Worldwide US, delivered the welcome remarks as the host organisation of the event.

# Apparel prices fall 1.61pc in 4yrs

**FROM PAGE B1**  
Bangladesh's garment manufacturers and exporters have not been getting proper prices as they do not deal with buyers directly, industry insiders said.

Most of the businesses are dealt through third party vendors, which take away a major portion of the profit from the supply chain, they add.

So the profit is shared in many layers in the whole supply chain and finally the downward pressure falls on the garment manufacturers due to their poor negotiation skills, they said.

In recent years, the garment manufacturers have spent big amounts of money to strengthen workplace safety and ensure better compliance as per the recommendations of foreign inspection agencies, including Accord and Alliance.

However, the retailers and brands which sponsored Accord and Alliance did not recommend increasing the price level of per unit garment item, some factory owners said.

So far, some 2,000 garment factories have spent \$5 lakh on an average each for factory remediation as per the recommendations of the

Accord and Alliance, said Rubana Huq, president of the BGMEA.

However, prices were not increased and in some cases even the prices have been lowered, she said.

Many owners have even been running their units accepting prices lower than production costs hoping to just stay afloat and pay the workers as they cannot make profit, she said on different occasions over the last few months.

Amidst constant pressure from the buyers to lower price, some 30 factories have been shut down in the last two months, Huq told The Daily Star over WhatsApp.

"Some 1,209 factories closed down in six years. We are making huge losses. Prices are dipping. Products are not improving," she said. "Value addition literally insignificant. Has remediation given us nothing except businesses to remain here? Is continuity of business more important than sustainability?" she asked.

"Business model is set by individual businesses. But a common thread should be doing business with an ethical angle," she added.

# Rupali Insurance re-elects chairman



STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mostafa Golam Quddus has recently been re-elected chairman of Rupali Insurance Company.

The election took place at a 187th meeting of the board of directors, says a press release.

Quddus is chairman of Dragon Group, a sweater producing company. He was a former president of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association.



**Ruslan Halim Bin Islahuddin, business head for Asia Pacific at Petronas Lubricants International, launches a promotional campaign for synthetic engine oil Petronas Syntium at Unimart in Dhaka recently. Amir H Khan, CEO of Petronas' distributor United Lube Oil, and Khalid Hassan, chief adviser of United Lube's parent company United Group, were present.**

UNITED LUBE

# Foreign funds in stocks slip into negative territory

**FROM PAGE B1**  
Investors anticipate a further depreciation of the taka as the central bank is artificially preventing the devaluation of the currency. The overall balance of payment stood at \$682 million in the negative during the July-May period of 2018-19, which was \$970 million in the negative year-on-year.

Bangladesh received \$5.7 billion in medium and long-term foreign debt in 2017-18, up from \$3.2 billion a year ago. A top official of another brokerage house blamed some of the sudden regulatory moves aimed at listed companies that spooked the confidence of foreigners.

The finance minister imposed tax on stock dividend and retained earnings of

listed companies out of the blue while unveiling the budget for the current fiscal year on June 13. Earlier, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission declared Grameenphone, the largest listed company in the country, as the operator with significant market power in an attempt to enhance competition in the industry.

To this effect, the regulator has already taken some decisions that will squeeze the business of the leading mobile phone operator.

The BTRC's decision came in February and the foreign investors' investment has been declining since March.

Brokers say foreign investors sold not only the stocks of Grameenphone but

also those of other companies as they lack confidence.

This was not the first time regulators' sudden moves against listed companies have hurt stocks.

In 2015 Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission cut the distribution charge for Titas Gas. As a result, the utility company lost more than Tk 3,000 crore in market value over a period of five months.

"Any sudden decision dents investors' confidence," said the brokerage house official, adding that there was a lack of coordination among the regulators. In order to attract foreign investors, Pasha recommends bringing good companies to the market and ensuring coordination among all the regulators.