

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
▲ 2.34%	▲ 1.270	\$1,491.30	\$59.33	▲ 0.76%	▲ 1.87%	▼ 0.27%	▼ 0.56%	BUY TK 83.75	91.36	104.83	0.75
4,821.64	8,899.55	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	38,506.09	22,207.21	3,116.17	2,991.05	SELL TK 84.75	95.16	108.63	0.79



এসআইবিএল
সুপার ডিপিএস

বিশেষ সঞ্চয় কিম্বা

প্রাক্লিট মুনাফা:

৩ বছর	৫ বছর	১০ বছর
৯.২৫%	৯.৫০%	১০%

ইসলামী পরীক্ষার এক মূল্যবান
নিতির ভিত্তিতে পরিচালিত।

SIBL
Social Islami Bank Limited

starBUSINESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 16, 2019, KARTIK 1, 1426 BS starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Sanofi to leave Bangladesh, confirms MD

REEFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Sanofi is now packing its bags to leave Bangladesh for strategic reasons, said the managing director of its local operations, bringing an end to weeks of speculation and denial.

“It may take 12 to 18 months from the moment Sanofi starts the process of selling its stakes to a buyer,” Md Muin Uddin Mazumder, managing director of Sanofi’s Bangladesh operations, told a group of journalists yesterday.

But, the French drug-maker is yet to find any takers for its stakes in the venture, where state-run Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) holds 45.36 percent stakes.

“No local or international company has gotten in touch yet,” Mazumder said, adding that no valuation has been done of Sanofi’s 54.64 percent stakes.

Rumours of Sanofi’s planned exit surfaced last month after Mazumder, Ramaprasad Bhat, country chairman and general manager of Sanofi Bangladesh, and Charles Billard, chief financial officer



Md Muin Uddin Mazumder

of Sanofi India and South Asia, met with BCIC Chairman Md Haiul Quaium, who is also the board chairman of Sanofi Bangladesh.

At the meeting, the trio conveyed the French pharma giant’s intent to sell its stakes for strategic reasons.

The rumours left Sanofi Bangladesh’s 1,000-strong workforce agitated.

But Sanofi continued to deny the rumours vehemently and earlier this month even sent out a letter to medical professionals reassuring them that the French pharma giant was not leaving Bangladesh anytime soon.

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Stocks bounce back but worries remain

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks bounced back yesterday thanks to the announcement of the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) to provide support to the market.

On Monday, ICB declared that it would start buying shares with Tk 200 crore it has at present and with another Tk 800 crore that it will get from four state-run banks through issuing bonds.

Some investors stopped selling shares yesterday amid a buying spree, which jacked up the premier bourse’s benchmark index by 2.34 percent or 110.37 points.

Despite the gain in the index, the general investors took part in an agitation programme in front of Dhaka Stock Exchange’s building yesterday, as they believe the rise would not persist.

The protesters also demanded resignation of some top officials of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC).

One agitator, Siddiqui Rahman, said the BSEC has failed to boost investors’ confidence by allowing funds to be raised by companies which were not performing well.

“Another name of water is life but dirty water is harmful for people. Similarly, many companies are needed in the market but not the ones performing poorly,” he said.

The stock market regulator failed to curb manipulation in the market, so small investors lost their money, he added.

Another investor, Mizanur Rahman, said the stock market may have bounced back but the investment firms have acknowledged that they do not have adequate funds to support the ailing market.

“So, we are still worried about



Aggrieved investors stage a demonstration in front of Dhaka Stock Exchange alleging that yesterday’s index rise would not persist for a lack of sincere efforts from the market regulator.

STAR

the market,” he said.

The present commission is working for the sake of a vested group for which it extended the tenure of closed-end mutual funds to 10 years, alleged Rahman, adding, “I incurred a huge loss for this decision.”

Rahman had invested in those mutual funds and was expecting to withdraw handsome profits through their liquidation on reaching maturity within one or two years.

However, the BSEC on September 16 last year gave the go-ahead to the extension of another 10 years for such funds upon demands of some

asset management companies and handed over the right to the asset managers.

Meanwhile, the DSE and DSE Brokers’ Association yesterday sat with 30 top brokers on the DSE premises to discuss the recent market fall.

However, the turnover remained low due to the cautious stance of investors. It hit Tk 328.05 crore, up 9 percent from the previous day.

According to the DSE data, Square Pharmaceuticals dominated the turnover chart yesterday followed by National Tubes, Beacon Pharmaceuticals, Summit

Power and Standard Ceramic.

Safko Spinning topped the gainers’ list with a 10 percent gain while Shyampur Sugar was the top loser shedding 6 percent.

Among the major sectors, telecom rose 4.9 percent, energy 3 percent and banking 1.1 percent.

Chittagong stocks also rose with the bourse’s benchmark index, the CSCX, increasing 149.33 points, or 1.7 percent, to finish the day at 8,899.55.

Gainers beat losers as 201 advanced, 24 declined while 13 finished unchanged on port city bourse.

Inflation hits 9-month high

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Inflation edged up five basis points to 5.54 percent in September, the highest in nine months, driven mainly by spiralling prices of food and non-food items.

The last month’s rate was higher than 5.49 percent recorded in August this year and 5.43 percent in September last year, according to data from state-run Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Food and non-food inflation drove up the overall inflation in the month.

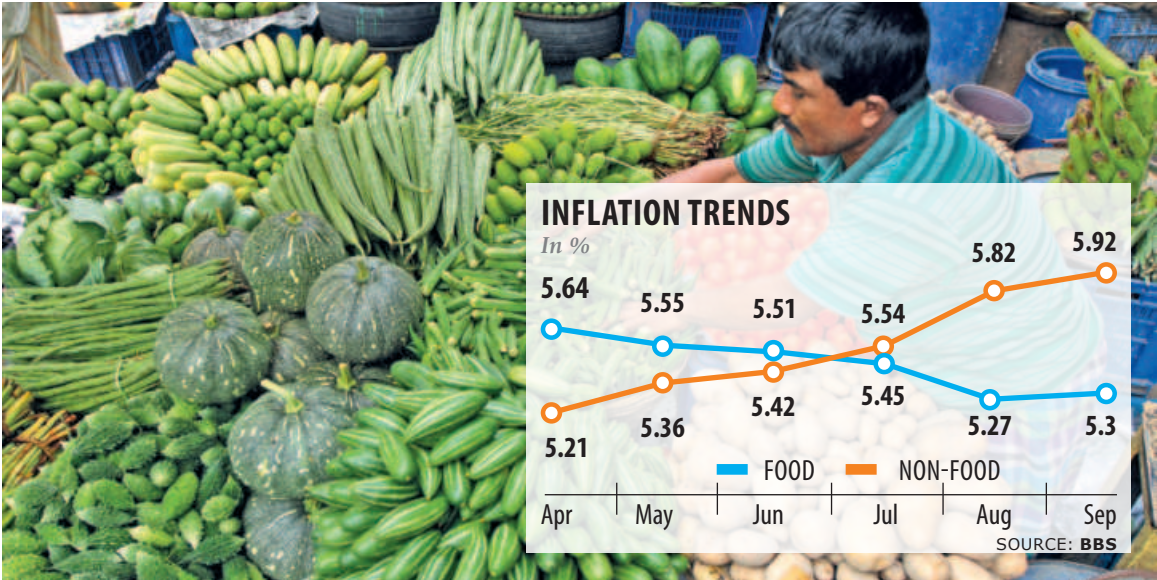
Food inflation rose by three basis points to 5.30 percent from 5.27 percent a month ago, while non-food surged 10 basis points to 5.92 percent from 5.82 percent.

In September, the prices of onion, ginger, dried chili, vegetables, fish, and broiler chicken went up compared to a month ago, the BBS said in an analysis.

Onion prices saw the sharpest increase in the food basket.

Onion prices surged sharply last month after traders hiked rates amid an Indian ban on export of the vegetable.

Retail prices of onion soared 25



percent overnight to Tk 55-70 per kg in the markets of Dhaka city on September 14, according to data of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

The prices went on to rise to Tk 90-95 a kg on the last day of September.

In the non-food sub-sector, the cost of health treatment and the

price of educational items rose last month, according to BBS data.

The data showed urban inflation went up to 5.41 percent from 5.34 percent, driven largely by the increase in the non-food inflation, which rose 17 basis points in a month to 5.42 percent in September.

General inflation in urban areas

rose to 5.80 percent, up five basis points from August. Both food and non-food inflation went up in urban areas.

The government has targeted a 5.5 percent inflation rate in the current fiscal year. It was able to contain it at 5.48 percent last fiscal year, comfortably below the target of 5.6 percent.

DSEX depressed despite soaring profits of firms

AHSAN HABIB

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, is refusing to pick up even though the profits of the listed companies continued to soar in the last five years.

Overall, the listed companies logged a profit of Tk 21,457 crore in 2013 and it soared 10.26 percent the following year, according to data from the DSE.

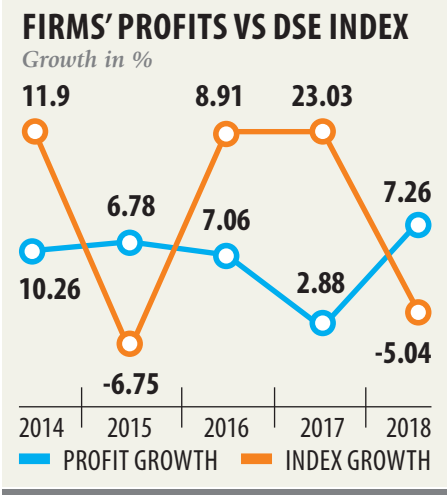
In the successive three years their profits rose 6.78 percent, 7.06 percent and 2.88 percent respectively. In 2018, their profits amounted to Tk 29,847 crore.

And yet, the market remains bearish most of the time, fanning frustration among investors.

For instance, on Monday, the DSEX plunged to 4,711, a three-year low.

“Maybe, the stock investors are skeptical of the earnings reported by the listed companies, so the index did not rise,” said Mohammad Musa, a stock market analyst.

Investors have a negative perception of the market, so the key index is not picking



up, he said.

Though the profit of the listed companies is rising, the DSEX hovered around 4,900 to 5,400 points for the best part of the last five years.

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Keep up with robotic revolution

Experts say at innovation expo

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Countries like Bangladesh will miss out on developing themselves at a faster rate if they fail to keep up with the changes being created by robotic revolution as it will lead the fourth industrial revolution, experts said yesterday.

Robots will kill lots of traditional jobs and at the same time, they will create more employment opportunities in the connected world, they said.

“Traditionally, Bangladesh is a physical labour-driven economy. Countries like us will fall into big trouble if we fail to cope up with the upcoming automation,” said Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, deputy education minister.

He spoke at a seminar styled “Present and Future of Robotics” on the second day of the Digital Device and Innovation Expo at Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Dhaka.

In the developed world, robots now fly airplanes, carry out complicated surgery, and run the service industry with heavy industrial works, Chowdhury said.

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Electrical products’ market growing fast

Credit goes to rapid urbanisation, increasing power generation and rising income of people

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The domestic market of electrical products and wiring solutions is growing fast thanks to the rapid urbanisation, increased availability of electricity and rising purchasing power of the general mass.

Such products now have a market of Tk 5,000 crore, which was hardly around Tk 1,500 crore in 2010, said Kamruzzaman Kamal, director for marketing of Pran-RFL Group, the owning entity of a major market player RFL Electronics.

MM Arslan, head of marketing at Bangladesh Lamps Ltd, thinks increasing power generation and massive electrification in rural areas have played the vital role for the market to grow in the last 10 years.

On May 29, Bangladesh produced 12,893 megawatts of electricity, the highest ever and a straight fourfold increase from what it was in fiscal 2009-10, according to the power division.

The government data says a staggering 93 percent people now have access to power and the number of beneficiaries has



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A man works inside a shop of electrical products in Dhaka recently.

doubled within a decade.

Moreover, per capita income more than doubled during the period, from \$751 in 2009-10 to \$1,909 last fiscal year, according to budget documents.

The new tax incentives introduced by the Industrial Policy 2016 have also encouraged the local entrepreneurs to make new investments in the sector, Arslan said.

Arslan said his company—a concern of Transcom Group—manufactures electric light bulbs, compact fluorescent lamps, tube lights and other lighting products.

Manufacturers of branded products cater for 50 percent of the local demand while the non-branded local and imported goods meet the rest, he said.

Most of the consumers do not care about the quality and safety issues of electric products, he said. “They only look for low-priced products.”

The quality of local electronic goods is better than the imported ones and the price is reasonable, said Nurul Aktar, CEO and a director of Energypac Electronics Ltd.

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Md Abul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator for SDGs affairs at Prime Minister's Office; Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association; Sudipto Mukerjee, resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, and Francois de Maricourt, CEO of HSBC Bangladesh, attend at a thought leadership programme on garment sector's sustainability jointly organised by the bank and the UNDP in Dhaka recently.

Trade pressure seen denting China's 2019 growth to 29-year low

China's economic growth is expected to slow to a near 30-year low of 6.2 percent this year and cool further to 5.9 percent in 2020, a Reuters poll showed, underlining the stiff challenge faced by Beijing even as it steps up stimulus amid a bruising Sino-US trade war.

The median forecast for 2019 growth is near the lower end of the government's target range of 6-6.5 percent, and would be the weakest expansion for the world's second-biggest economy since 1990.

The poll of 83 analysts also forecast third-quarter growth at 6.1 percent year-on-year, lower from 6.2 percent in the last survey done in July and a touch below the 6.2 percent pace in the second quarter.

On the whole, it would mark a further slowdown from growth of 6.6 percent in 2018 and 6.8 percent in 2017, highlighting the intensifying global and domestic pressures on the Asian powerhouse.

China will release its third-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) data on Oct 18.

Growth in 2020 will likely cool



A worker sorts imported goods on a truck next to containers at a port in Qingdao, China on October 14.

further to 5.9 percent, the poll showed, below the 6.0 percent forecast in the previous survey.

A raft of downbeat data in recent months has highlighted weaker demand at home and abroad, fanning market expectations that Beijing will need to unveil more stimulus steps to ward off a sharper slowdown and prevent more job losses.

"Should labor market deteriorate sharply in late 2019 and early 2020, policy support may intensify in March next year," Tao Wang, China economist at UBS, said in a note.

"As policy measures strengthen and take effect, and as the shock of higher tariffs peaks in Q1 2020, we

see China's GDP growth rebounding from Q2 2020 onwards."

Beijing has been relying on a combination of fiscal stimulus and monetary easing to weather the current slowdown, but analysts say the room for aggressive policy action has been limited by worries over debt and housing risks.

Chinese central bank governor Yi Gang said late in September there was no urgent need to implement large interest rate cuts following Beijing's reiteration that it would not use "flood-like" stimulus measures.

The outlook is unlikely to change for the better anytime soon even as tensions in the protracted trade war between Beijing and Washington have eased somewhat. US President Donald Trump said on Friday the two sides had reached agreement on the first phase of a deal and suspended a tariff hike, but officials said much work still needed to be done.

Analysts in the latest Reuters poll expect the People's Bank of China (PBOC) would ease policy further by cutting banks' reserve retirement ratios (RRR) and the one-year loan prime rate (LPR), its new benchmark lending rate.

Malaysia offers to buy more sugar, meat from India

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia said on Tuesday it would look to increase imports of crude sugar and buffalo meat from India, after reports that New Delhi was considering restricting imports of palm oil from Malaysia following its criticism of its actions in Kashmir.

Malaysia is the world's second largest producer and exporter of palm oil after Indonesia, and the edible oil contributed to 2.8 percent of its gross domestic product last year. Malaysian palm oil futures FCPO3 fell for a third straight session on Tuesday, hitting their lowest in nearly two weeks.

"These steps will be taken in light of India's importance as our third-largest export destination in 2018 for palm oil and palm-based products worth 6.84 billion ringgit (\$1.63 billion)," Teresa Kok, the Malaysian minister in charge of the palm oil portfolio, said in a statement. India is one of the biggest producers of sugar and buffalo meat in the world.

German investor confidence steadies in October

AFP, Frankfurt

Confidence among investors in Germany stabilised in October after recovering from a late summer plunge last month, a survey released Tuesday showed, but financial players continue to fear trade conflicts.

The Mannheim-based ZEW institute's monthly barometer of expectations for the coming months inched down 0.3 points compared with September, to -22.8.

"Financial experts continue to assume a worsening economic situation in Germany," ZEW chief Achim Wambach said in a statement.

"The latest deal reached in the US-China trade conflict does not seem to be reducing scepticism about growth," he added.

US President Donald Trump in recent days touted a trade breakthrough with Beijing, although details remain unclear.

Germany's economy has suffered direct and indirect blows from US-led trade conflicts since Trump took office, with particular exposure from its close links to the Chinese economy.

China was Germany's biggest trade partner between January and July, with 117 billion euros (\$130 billion) of exchanges, official data released Monday showed.

Indicators point to a sharp weakening in German industry, while most observers expect GDP figures released Thursday to show a second successive quarter of economic shrinkage between July and September -- placing the country in technical recession.

Tuesday's ZEW survey showed investors' views of the present business situation fell back 5.4 points, to -25.3 points.

Looking to Germany's 19-nation eurozone neighbourhood, investors' judgement of the outlook shed 1.1 points to -23.5, while the present situation barometer tumbled 10.8 points, to -26.4.



Md Mahub ul Alam, CEO of Islami Bank Bangladesh, opens the bank's 348th branch at Padma Life Tower in the capital's Banglamotor on Monday.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Superintending Engineer (RHD)
HDM Circle
Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

EoI Ref. No: HDM/2019-20/03

Date: 14.10.2019

Request for Expression of Interest (EoI) for Selection of Consulting Firm

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) under the Road Transport and Highways Division, Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges has been allocated public funds from the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) for Carrying out Road Inventory Survey (with LRP), Road Condition Survey, GPS Survey, Test Pit Survey, Deflection Survey of RHD Road Network of Rajshahi and Rangpur Zone by engaging consulting firm (National) during the year 2019-20 (Package No- HDM/2019-20/SR-3).

The Superintending Engineer (RHD), HDM Circle (hereinafter referred to as the 'Client') now invites Expression of Interest (EoI) from reputed consulting firm or firms in joint venture/association for short-listing the consulting services.

The services include:

The services include for Rajshahi and Rangpur Zone: (a) Carrying out Pavement Inventory Survey (with LRP) of RHD Road Network; (b) Carrying out Road Condition Survey of RHD Road Network; (c) Carrying out Road Centerline GPS Survey of selected RHD Road Network; (d) Carrying out Test Pit Survey (Construction Type and Quality) of RHD Road Network; (e) Carrying out Deflection Survey of selected RHD Road Network; (f) Providing 01(One) no of 4WD, 5 door, 2300 cc Jeep with air-condition system and including all expenses of driver, fuel, lubricants, tolls etc as required. These services shall be completed within six (06) months from the date of commencement.

The experience, resources and delivery capacity required: Submitted EoIs will be evaluated based on the following:

1. Brochures & registration of the firm(s);

2. Legal establishment of the firm(s) (TIN, VAT Registration, Trade License etc);

3. General and overall experience of the firm(s) (limited to three pages);

4. Experience of the firm(s) in similar works during the last 10 years including cost and duration; (Limited to three pages);

5. Average annual turnover of the firm(s) during the last 3 (three) years; and


6. Summary of permanent professional employees with key qualifications. (including academic qualification and experience adequacy to perform the assignment)

Interested bonafide consulting firm/joint venture firms are invited to submit EoI enclosing only the required information mentioned above. In case of joint venture it is preferable to limit the total number of firm including associates to a maximum of 3 (three).

Consulting firm will be selected using the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) procurement method in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules 2008 and procurement procedures issued by the Government of Bangladesh.

EoI shall be submitted on or before **Tuesday, 05 November 2019 by 12.00pm** in sealed envelope to the Superintending Engineer (RHD), Room No-G/201, HDM Circle, Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208 and be clearly marked "**Request for Expressions of Interest for Selection of Consulting Firm for Rajshahi and Rangpur Zone (Package No- HDM/2019-20/SR-3)**"

The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the EoIs without assigning any reason whatsoever.


(Mohammad Rabiul Alam)
ID No: 000425
Superintending Engineer, RHD
HDM Circle
Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka

GD-1690

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Superintending Engineer (RHD)
HDM Circle
Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

EoI Ref. No: HDM/2019-20/04

Date: 14.10.2019

Request for Expression of Interest (EoI) for Selection of Consulting Firm

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) under the Road Transport and Highways Division, Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges has been allocated public funds from the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) for Carrying out Road Inventory Survey (with LRP), Road Condition Survey, GPS Survey, Test Pit Survey, Deflection Survey of RHD Road Network of Barishal, Khulna and Gopalganj Zone by engaging consulting firm (National) during the year 2019-20 (Package No- HDM/2019-20/SR-4).

The Superintending Engineer (RHD), HDM Circle (hereinafter referred to as the 'Client') now invites Expression of Interest (EoI) from reputed consulting firm or firms in joint venture/association for short-listing the consulting services.

The services include:

The services include for Barishal, Khulna and Gopalganj Zone: (a) Carrying out Pavement Inventory Survey (with LRP) of RHD Road Network; (b) Carrying out Road Condition Survey of RHD Road Network; (c) Carrying out Road Centerline GPS Survey of selected RHD Road Network; (d) Carrying out Test Pit Survey (Construction Type and Quality) of RHD Road Network; (e) Carrying out Deflection Survey of selected RHD Road Network; (f) Providing 01(One) no of 4WD, 5 door, 2300 cc Jeep with air-condition system and including all expenses of driver, fuel, lubricants, tolls etc as required. These services shall be completed within six (06) months from the date of commencement.

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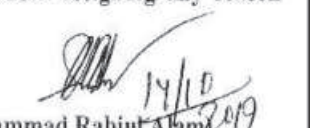
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The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the EoIs without assigning any reason whatsoever.


(Mohammad Rabiul Alam)
ID No: 000425
Superintending Engineer, RHD
HDM Circle
Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka

GD-1689

Global outlook ‘precarious,’ no room for policy mistakes: IMF

AFP, Washington

The world economy is slowing to its weakest pace since the global financial crisis, amid continuing trade conflicts that have undercut business confidence and investment, the IMF said Tuesday.

It warned that the outlook is beset by risks, and urged policymakers to work to find resolutions to trade disputes, since there are limited tools to respond to a new crisis.

“With a synchronized slowdown and uncertain recovery, the global outlook remains precarious,” International Monetary Fund chief economist Gita Gopinath said in her introduction to the latest forecasts.

The IMF for the past year has every three months cut projected growth for 2019 as trade conflicts worsened.

In its latest World Economic Outlook it trimmed the estimate by another two-tenths, to 3.0 percent. The report also lowered the 2020 forecast by a tenth to 3.4 percent.

“At three percent growth, there is no room for policy mistakes and an urgent need for policymakers to cooperatively deescalate trade and geopolitical tensions,” Gopinath said.

In addition, the trade conflicts and a slowdown in auto sales worldwide means trade growth has slowed sharply, falling in the first half of the year to its weakest since 2012, with an estimated increase of just 1.1 percent this year after a 3.6 percent jump in 2018.

While the US economy also has been hit by uncertainty -- largely created by President Donald Trump’s trade offensive -- the world’s largest economy remains a bright spot on the global stage, the report said.

After upgrading its US outlook in July, the latest WEO reversed course, and cutting the US forecast this year to 2.4 percent -- still above trend, but two-tenths below the July forecast.



IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath

In 2020, the IMF projects US GDP to expand by 2.1 percent, unchanged from the prior report.

“For the United States, trade related uncertainty has had negative effects on investment, but employment and consumption continue to be robust, buoyed also by policy stimulus,” Gopinath said.

Major central banks have taken steps to soften

the blow to growth by lowering interest rates, without which the downturn would have been worse, she said. However, she cautioned that monetary policy “cannot be the only game in town” and governments, notably in countries like Germany, should take advantage of low rates to make investments to support growth.

“With central banks having to spend limited ammunition to offset policy mistakes, they may have little left when the economy is in a tougher spot,” Gopinath warned.

The US-China trade war alone is estimated to shrink the world economy by 0.8 percent in 2020, the IMF said.

The fund warned that risks to the outlook predominate, and the uncertainty around trade policy -- which causes businesses to hold off on investments and undermines confidence -- will take a larger chunk out of growth than the tariffs themselves.

“To forestall such an outcome, policies should decisively aim at defusing trade tensions, reinvigorating multilateral cooperation, and providing timely support to economic activity where needed,” the report said.

But trade is not the only reason for the global slowdown: the report notes that in China’s economy, for example, growth is moderating as intended amid slowing domestic demand.

Other major economies like Brazil, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa are slowing this year due to “idiosyncratic reasons” but are expected to recover in 2020.



New MD for Union Capital

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Chowdhury Manzoor

Liaquat has recently been appointed managing director and chief executive officer of non-bank financial institution Union Capital Ltd.

He had previously been serving as its additional and acting managing director, according to a statement.

Liaquat started his career as a probationary officer at AB Bank and moved on to serve Bank Asia as senior executive vice president.

He earned his postgraduation degree in international relations from the University of Dhaka.

Alcatel smartphones make Bangladesh debut

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mobile phone brand Alcatel has recently debuted its latest range of smartphones and features phones in Bangladesh in e-commerce marketplace daraz.com.

With a 3GB RAM and 32GB ROM, smartphone Alcatel 3 costs Tk 12,999 while Alcatel 3, with a 4GB RAM and 64GB ROM, Tk 14,999. The devices will be available in the offline market soon, according to a statement.

Grameen Distribution LTD (GDL) has become the authorised distributors for the brand of TCT Mobile International Ltd headquartered in Hong Kong.

“We are very excited about this venture. We are quite confident that their aesthetically eye-catching modern design, technicality, durability and compatibility will be highly praised by the consumers of Bangladesh,” said Md Ashrafur Hassan, the GDL managing director.

Bharadwaj Pudippedi, director for India region at the TCT, said, “Bangladesh has been a growing market in the mobile industry and we are quite confident that Alcatel will be able to capture the market with its latest technology and global quality.”

BKB gets new DMD

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shirin Akhter has recently joined Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) as a deputy managing director (DMD). She was previously the general manager of Agrani Bank, according to a statement.

Akhter started her banking career in Agrani Bank as a senior officer in 1988 on obtaining her graduate and postgraduate degrees in political science from the University of Dhaka.



Keep up with robotic revolution

FROM PAGE B1

And even sometimes people don’t feel that they are taking service from robots, which also help grow economies, said Prof Laffa Jamal, chairperson of the robotics and mechatronics engineering department at the University of Dhaka.

Laffa, also the president of Bangladesh Robot Olympiad, said in Japan robots were now taking classes. South Korea is using robots to run the ground handling of airports.

In her presentation, Laffa said by 2035 artificial intelligence would help double the economic growth rate in 12 developed countries and boost labour productivity by up to 40 percent.

From Bangladesh’s context, she said a lack of research funding and research infrastructure was the main challenge. “We have human resources and we need to nurse and use them efficiently in order to match the developed countries.”

Hriteshwar Talukder, a lecturer of the electrical and electronic engineering department at the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, said they were now in the planning stage to develop a special robot that could be used in rice harvesting.

Huge labour crisis is noticed in Sylhet region every year during harvest season and that’s why a team from the SUST is now working on the issue.

“But again there is funding shortage. Laboratory facilities are also a challenge here as well.”

Nabaron Bhattacharyya, senior director and central head at the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing in Kolkata, said third world countries should give emphasis on using robots and automation in education, health and agriculture as they boost productivity.

Prof Muhammad Alamgir, a member of University Grants Commission, Md Abul Kashem Mia, a professor of the computer science and engineering at Buet, Waiz Rahim, chief executive officer of Deligram, and Quazi Mustahid Labib, who won a gold medal at the International Robot Olympiad, also spoke.

A good number of universities are taking part in the exposition and demonstrating their robotic innovation that can respond promptly, chat in Bangla, move fast and have lots of industrial applications using artificial intelligence.

London retains global finance throne amid Brexit chaos

REUTERS, London

From the pinnacle of the City of London’s largest skyscraper, Stuart Lipton is wagering a \$1.2 billion bet that the British capital remains a master of the international financial universe no matter what happens with Brexit.

The 76-year-old property developer is not alone. Bankrolled by a host of global investors, including France’s Axa, his big-ticket gamble in London’s financial district is - so far - on the money.

The cataclysmic warnings during the 2016 referendum that London would lose its financial throne if it voted to leave the European Union (EU) have, so far, been proven wrong. London is still the world’s banker, only bigger by some measures.

“London is extraordinarily resilient and its future as a finance centre is secure because what we have here is unique,” Lipton told Reuters on the 61st floor of 22 Bishopsgate, set to become western Europe’s second tallest skyscraper when it opens next year.

In the year to June, London has attracted more cross border commercial real estate investment than any other city. It has overtaken New York as destination for fintech investment and it has increased its dominance of the world’s \$6.6 trillion daily foreign exchange market.

Since the vote to leave the EU, Britain has leapfrogged the United States to become the largest centre for trading interest rate swaps, despite calls by ex-French President Francois Hollande to end London’s dominance in clearing euro-denominated derivatives.

That London has expanded its influence as an international finance centre is one of the biggest riddles of the United Kingdom’s

tortuous three year Brexit crisis.

The city’s standing ensures the United Kingdom keeps one of its last big chips at the top table of world politics just as it splits from the EU.

It also means EU companies will still come to London to raise finance outside the bloc after Brexit, a fact not lost on Wall Street heavyweights such as Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan.

Just a mile away from 22 Bishopsgate, Goldman opened its new 1 million square foot European headquarters - complete with mothers’ rooms and wildflowers on the roof - in July, three years on from the 2016 referendum.

Largely abandoned by the British government during Brexit talks, ten senior industry officials told Reuters London’s



REUTERS/FILE

A general view of London is seen from the construction site of 22 Bishopsgate.

Hyundai Motor Group unveils \$35b investment plan

REUTERS, Seoul

Hyundai Motor Group said it plans to invest 41 trillion won (\$35 billion) in mobility and other auto technologies by 2025, part of which will be directed to an ambitious effort to become more competitive in self-driving cars that has also received government backing.

The plan, which Hyundai said encompasses autonomous, connected and electric cars as well as technology for ride-sharing, comes after the automaker and two of its affiliates announced an investment of \$1.6 billion in a venture with US self-driving tech firm Aptiv.

South Korea’s government is also onboard, unveiling more funding for autonomous vehicle technology with President Moon Jae-in declaring on Tuesday that he expected self-driving cars to account for half of new cars on the country’s roads by 2030.

“The self-driving market is a golden market to revitalize the economy and create new jobs,” Moon said in a speech at Hyundai Motor’s research center near Seoul.

The government intends to spend 1.7 trillion won between 2021 and 2027 on self-driving technology. It expects Hyundai to launch level 4, or fully autonomous, cars for fleet customers in 2024 and for the general public by 2027, an industry ministry official told Reuters.

But some experts question whether targets set by the government and the automotive group, which also includes Kia Motors Corp, are realistic given the technological and cost challenges and the lack of home-

grown technology.

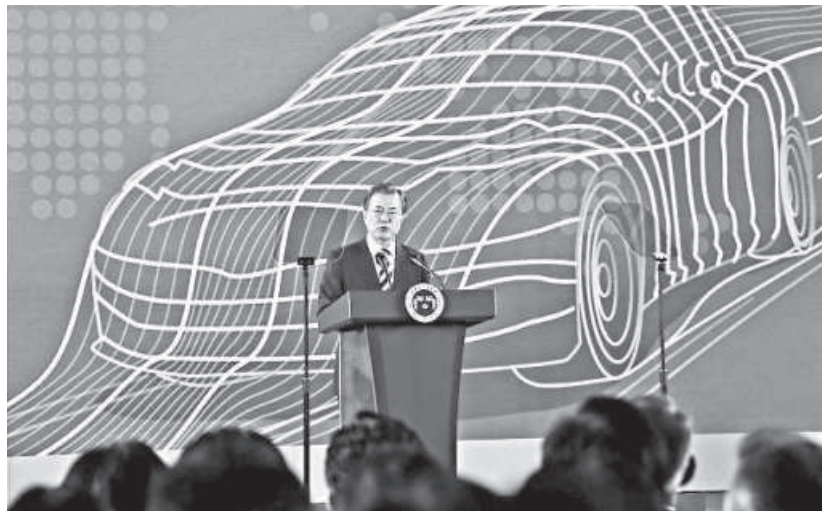
In a 45-page report on future automotive technology, the government acknowledged South Korea lags in some key areas necessary for self-driving cars such as artificial intelligence, sensors and logic chips.

“Hyundai has to buy technology from someone else because it lacks software technology. Even though it has a lot of cash, this could become a financial burden if its earnings deteriorate,” Esther Yim, an analyst at Samsung Securities, said. Other analysts noted that the prospects for self-driving cars are quite murky.

General Motors Co’s self-driving unit, Cruise, said in July it was delaying

the commercial deployment of cars past its target of 2019 as tech firms and automakers acknowledge it will take more time and money than they had expected to make autonomous vehicles safe for unrestricted use on public roads.

South Korea’s government said it would prepare a regulatory and legal framework for autonomous cars and the safety questions they pose by 2024. It is also aiming to lay the technological and legal groundwork for demonstrations of flying cars by 2025. Hyundai Motor’s executive vice chairman Euisun Chung said last month that the company is looking at developing flying cars.



REUTERS/FILE

South Korean President Moon Jae-in delivers his speech during a ceremony declaring the country’s vision to lead future mobility tech at Hyundai Motor’s Namyang R&D Center in Hwaseong, South Korea yesterday.

Electrical products’ market growing fast

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Local manufacturers, however, are facing unhealthy competition from non-branded imported products, he said, adding that his company produces home wiring accessories, light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs and tube lights and ceiling fan.

Despite a rise in the purchasing power, a large group of people still prefer using the substandard and low-priced goods available in the market, Aktar said.

“But customers should go for buying quality products for the sake of safety.”

RFL Electronics started its operation in 2012 and it currently meets about 10 percent of the total demand for electrical products and its annual growth is around 15 percent, Kamal said.

Now, RFL manufactures cables, switches, fan, LED bulb, circuit breakers and electrical accessories under four brands, namely Click, Bizli, Proton and Vision, he said.

Walton began manufacturing electric accessories and appliances in 2016 and within three years, it captured around 15 percent of the market share, said Augustin Suján, deputy director of the company.

The company has set a target to double the market share by next year and hopes to be the market leader in the segment in the coming years, he said.

Other noted manufacturers of electrical products are Super Star Group, MEP Group and ACL.

DSEX depressed despite soaring profits of firms

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The index was buoyant for about three months towards the end of 2017 when it hit 6,336 points.

Some bad news of default loans and scams in banks and non-bank financial institutions dented investors’ confidence, so the stocks plummeted and the index was negatively influenced even though the profit of the two sectors is rising, said Musa, a former dean of the school of business and economics of the United International University.

Though the listed companies’ earnings rose, many companies provided stock dividend and right shares during the period. “This caused the fall of the share prices too,” Musa added.

Bangladesh’s stock market is retail investor-driven and they invest mostly for capital gains without any careful analysis, said a stock broker requesting anonymity. “So, the index does not depict the

real scenario of the economy and listed companies’ profitability. I see a huge mismatch in many stock prices due to a lack of analysis-based investment,” said the broker, who was a former president of the DSE.

Take, for instance, the case of Monno Jute Staffers, whose price is now more than Tk 1,500 even though its price-to-earnings ratio is upwards of 200.

“Yet, more investors rushed to have the stock, whereas many well-performing stocks are declining but they have no interest on them,” the broker said.

Investors flocking towards Stylecraft, National Tubes, Monno Ceramics, Legacy Footwear and many other poorly performing stocks raised questions of the investors’ analytical ability, he said.

Such mismatch is frequent in the market, so the index is declining even after the listed companies’ earnings are rising.

Sanofi to leave Bangladesh, confirms MD

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Mazumder’s disclosure puts to bed all rumours.

“However, Sanofi will be sold out with the employment guarantee clause so that some 1,100 employees need not lose their jobs,” he said, adding that Sanofi’s products will also be in the market with the same quality as of now.

Sanofi’s share in the country’s pharma market is below 2 percent and its ranking is 17th among the local medicine manufacturers.

“The intent to leave Bangladesh is a global decision and has nothing to do

with the local atmosphere. We have little choice here although Sanofi has been making profit since its establishment at Tongi in 1958,” Mazumder said.

Last year, Sanofi Bangladesh logged in profits of Tk 42.12 crore, up 13.62 percent year-on-year, company documents show.

Its turnover increased 5 percent to 7 percent year-on-year over the last few years, according to Mazumder.

Sanofi’s exit though is a massive blow to the government at a time when it is earnestly looking to attract foreign direct investment.



Through October 3rd to 7th, BMW owners and media personnel from around Asia were invited by BMW Group Asia to attend BMW M Track Days 2019 at Malaysia's Sepang Formula 1 circuit. Over the course of four days, BMW owners and automotive journalists—typically used to street cars in their home countries—were treated to an experience worthy of the performance and prestige of BMW's M Division and the ballistic missiles with tyres that are M cars.

It wasn't just about cars though. For the first few days of our stay in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, we were treated to the finest of mixers, lunch and dinner events and guided tours.

On the first night, we were taken to a BMW organized mixer at the Cantaloupe at Troika Sky Dining—where owners, journalists and BMW sales representatives could get to know each other. A delectable eight course meal followed—including scrumptious Wagyu beef, tiger prawns, and more. The view of Kuala Lumpur's impressive skyline, soft lounge music and the fantastic food and hospitality set the tone for the rest of the trip. On the second day, the guests (us) were taken on a tour of the Royal Selangor facility that produces the



finest offerings of Malaysia's century long pewter products industry, with a surprise at the end—all the guests walked away with a pewter bowl that they made themselves, with their names stamped on the bottom and a certificate proclaiming their newfound expertise at hammering a pewter sheet into a bowl. A fine lunch at Manja Old Malaya—within stones' throw of



the KL Tower—was followed by yet another foray into Malaysian handicrafts, this time at Jati Batek. Guests then learned the craft of batek t-shirt painting, painted their own t-shirts with a design of their choice, and walked away with their very own batek painted t-shirt.

Free and easy time in-between, however, was spent thinking of 6th October, the group's des-

ignated track day at Sepang. The idea of being allowed to drive around an ex-Formula 1 track that used to be frequent haunts of the likes of Michael Schumacher and Kimi Raikkonen on race days filled everyone with nervous anticipation and excitement. That we would be driving extremely powerful, rear-wheel drive and all-wheel drive BMW M cars around a circuit where you could hit speeds close to 300 km/h easily was not far off in the thought process.

Come race day, out on the track, a trio of models were waiting for the drivers—2019 models of the beastly, 591 HP/553 lb-ft torque M5, the poised yet capable 425 HP/406 lb-ft M4, as well as the drift-happy 405 HP/406 lb-ft M2 Competition. We strapped in, went out to the back straight to do some acceleration and braking practice runs, and then, after a slow spotting lap around the circuit, we were off.

Driving the M5 on a track is vastly different from piloting the large, four door performance sedan around city streets. The acceleration, unfettered by concerns of driving over pesky humans, is violent and unnerving, especially if you have a heavy foot. Fortunately, it stops just as quickly and less violently, a fact that came in handy when decelerating from 260 km/h to 60

km/h for the first turn and right-left chicane at Sepang. The AWD system keeps you in the safe zones of performance—allowing you to have fun but keeping the rear in check even during aggressive cornering.

By contrast, the M2 Competition is a pure drivers' car. Normally the M2 Comp would have a traditional 6-speed manual driving the rear wheels, but for this event, BMW managed to find an automatic. Even the automatic proved to be a handful if you were over-eager with the throttle input—the M2 was quite happy to reward you with a change-of-pants-needed moment if you dared it. While noticeably slower in the straights compared to the M5, the M2 Competition and the M4 were definitely the drivers' choices over the heavier M5.

Overall, the four days spent at KL proved that BMW not only provides the performance and engineering quality that it is famed for in its cars, but also goes many extra miles to ensure the ownership experience is just as rewarding. If only Bangladesh's tax structure allowed the import of M cars...

WORDS: SHAER REAZ
PHOTOS: FARHAN739

AUTO NEWS

Chevrolet Corvette C8R – channeling the successes of past Vette racers



Chevrolet just released the C8.R Corvette, which is the race car version of the road going car. But before we get into that, I think it is important to put into context how much weight the Corvette nameplate holds and how much the C8.R has to live up to.

The Corvette moniker has been around for 66 years now, and has stood alone as America's only sports car. Corvette's

racing history has been rich for almost as long as they have been around. After the initial Corvette "failure" where Chevrolet developed a car that looked good but was not exactly the best in the driving department, Chevrolet later paired the chassis with a V8 and successfully sold and raced them to the Corvettes we know today. The Corvette nameplate won first at LeMans

in 1960 with the C1, and in later generations developed splendid track cars, notably the C3, C5 and C6, all of which dominated tracks all around.

The C8.R Corvette swears at the face of tradition—the front engine, rear wheel drive layout is no more and long gone are pushrod V8s, replaced by a mid-engine layout and dual overhead

cam, direct injection V8 with a flat plane crank. The engine is mated to a 6 speed sequential gearbox, and has been reported to make 500 HP and 480lb-ft of torque from its 5.5 liters of displacement.

HASEEB CHOWDHURY

COLLECTIBLES

MiniGT Honda Civic Type R FK8

Malaysia, despite being car crazy and sporting a healthy tuner lifestyle, is surprisingly low on the scale of places where you can pick up a good die-cast. I did manage, though, and walked away from BMW's M-Track Days 2019 (story above) with a MiniGT Honda Civic, hastily purchased from the duty free shops at the KL airport.

For a price of RM 50 (roughly BDT 1000), the 1:64 FK8 Honda Civic Type R (mine in Aegean Blue, with Modulo aftermarket bits) carries fantastic detailing and spot-on scale—while it may be larger than every other 1:64 scale from other manufacturers, the logos, lights and intricate details all look scaled to proportion. The paint and interior details are great too. On to the quibbles—the mirrors are rubber, and one of the wheels have a casting issue where its not a complete circle, reportedly a common issue with MiniGT. Another common issue, similar to Tarmac Works, are the larger-than-scale shut-lines. Otherwise, fantastic buy. Congratulations to me.

SHAER REAZ

