STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES (STANDARD CHARTERED BANK)				
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI		$USD	€EUR	£GBP	¥JPY
0.20%	0.26%	$1,461.30	$61.99	0.05%	0.26%	0.72%	1.83%	BUY TK	83.85	92.79	107.79	0.76
4,781.47	8,821.66	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	40,345.08	23,331.84	3,240.65	2,909.97	SELL TK	84.85	95.59	111.59	0.80

Star BUSINESS

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Businesses expect robust growth next year

97pc eye expansion, says HSBC Navigator report

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As high as 97 percent of business enterprises in Bangladesh said they would expand their operations next year, buoyed by a strong economy and positive international trade prospects, according to the HSBC's flagship Navigator report.

"Bangladeshi businesses are brimming with confidence," said the report, which was launched globally yesterday.

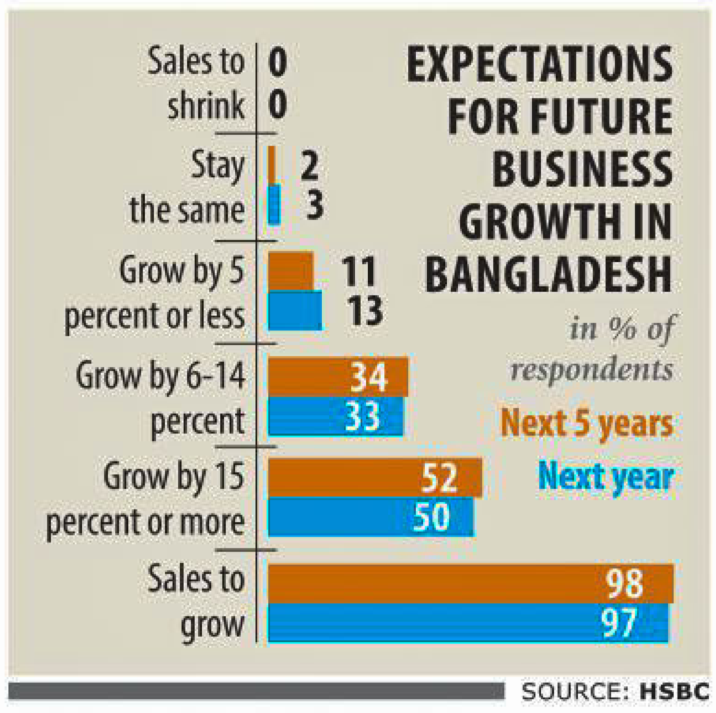
The percentage is much higher than the global average of 79 percent and the Asian average of 77 percent.

"Nearly all Bangladeshi firms surveyed have an optimistic outlook," the survey report said.

Moreover, 50 percent of Bangladeshi businesses are expecting growth of 15 percent or more, which would be about twice the rate of the expected GDP growth in the country.

The Navigator survey, which is the largest of its kind, is conducted on behalf of HSBC by Kantar.

The study gauges sentiment and expectations of businesses in the near to mid-term future on topics, including business outlook, international trade, geopolitics, sustainability, technology and wellbeing. It is compiled from responses by decision-makers at 9,131 businesses – from small and mid-market to large corporations – across a broad range of industry sectors in 35 markets.



SOURCE: HSBC

The survey was conducted between August and September 2019. The report -- Navigator: Now, next and how for business – surveyed 193 businesses in Bangladesh, shedding light on their investment priorities, decision-making drivers, and plans to implement change and growth expectations.

Business confidence in Bangladesh is significantly higher than the global and Asian averages, the report said. Business confidence in Bangladesh is also on the rise: 74 percent are optimistic about their prospects than a year ago, compared to the Asian average of 43 percent.

"Bangladesh is at the heart of Asia's emerging growth, so it's only fitting that its businesses are among the most bullish globally," said Francois de Maricourt, chief executive officer of HSBC Bangladesh, in a statement.

"What we are seeing is Bangladeshi businesses proactively adapting to the pace of global change, with expansion into new markets, investments in innovation, and upskilling their workforce as key ways to boost growth."

Bolstered by fast-growing industries, nine in 10 Bangladeshi businesses believe international trade is a force for good that will drive innovation and improve efficiency.

"With a strong focus on manufacturing and industries like garments that continue to grow, Bangladesh remains well-poised to make gains from international trade in the years to come," Maricourt said.

Asia remains the main arena where Bangladeshi firms trade, with more than four in five (83 percent) companies citing its importance. The largest trading partners for Bangladeshi firms are mainland China (43 percent), Japan (36 percent), and India (27 percent).

Over the past year Bangladeshi firms have continued to strengthen key business corridors, with China continuing to be a top trading partner.

Firms are also eyeing fresh pathways to growth, with Japan more than tripling in importance to replace Malaysia as Bangladesh's second most important trading partner, the report also said.

Meanwhile, trade with most major European economies, such as Germany, France and Italy has more than halved in the last 12 months. However, the slack has been picked up by the US, which has doubled in importance over the last year.

The report also suggested some measures to be taken by the country to harness the potentials of the global trade.

Despite their sky-high confidence, Bangladeshi businesses are not immune from the impacts of protectionist policies in their key markets although the threat is felt substantially less than what was last year.

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ACI posts Tk 74cr in losses

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

ACI, one of the country's largest listed conglomerates, incurred a massive loss of Tk 74.2 crore in 2018-19, something it attributes to a jump in bank interest rates and declines in healthcare and agri operations.

Just a year ago, ACI made a profit of Tk 51.7 crore. It last suffered a loss in 2012.

Earnings per share of the company stood at Tk 14.87 in the negative at the end of 2018-19, significantly down from Tk 10.36 in the positive a year ago, according to data posted in Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday.

"A sudden jump in interest rate from 7 percent to 11 percent and volatile foreign exchange market have eroded Tk 70 crore from our earnings this year," ACI Managing Director Arif Dowla said yesterday.

Addressing a press meet to disclose its quarterly earnings at ACI Center in the capital, Arif said their agri business suffered for low paddy prices last year.

He also spoke of the establishment of a Tk 800 crore pharmaceuticals manufacturing unit to dedicatedly serve the US market.

"This unit is consuming huge amounts of money without generating any revenue as we are waiting to get approval from the US Drug Administration."

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Fintech to boost stocks

Experts say; China tech firm offers services

AHSAN HABIB, *back from Shenzhen, China*

A lack of financial technology or fintech, well-rounded governance and securities with good track records is to blame for the very minimum participation of people in Bangladesh's stock market compared to peer countries, say specialists.

"Only 1.8 percent of people in Bangladesh are investing in stocks, assuming that there are 30 lakh investors, which is much low among Asian countries," said Xueyun Li, manager of Shenzhen Kingdom Sci-Tech.

Of the 250 brokers of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), only a few provide online trading facilities to clients while 90 percent of trading orders are placed in writing and through phone, leaving scope for mistakes and problems, she said.

"Fintech regarding the analysis of stocks is also rare. So fintech is necessary to attract investors," said Li while delivering a presentation at Kingdom China Capital Market Conference at Hilton Shenzhen Shekou Nanhai in China on Friday.

Fintech includes new technologies, such as specialised software and algorithms, used on computers and increasingly on smartphones that improve and automate service delivery.

Addressing the event, Prof Abul Hashem, the DSE chairman, said Bangladesh's stock market offered immense potential as a large number of people were yet to join it. "To bring them…we are putting emphasis on technology," he said.

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