



A Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Bank Asia, and Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director, pose with a trophy of the "6th ICSB National Award for Corporate Governance Excellence-2018" at the bank's corporate office in Dhaka. Bank Asia won a gold medal in the banking sector presented by the Institute of Chartered Secretaries of Bangladesh at the Radisson Blu hotel in Dhaka on Saturday.

Dubai's Emaar to sell view from world's tallest tower

REUTERS, Dubai

Emaar Properties is selling the observation decks of the world's tallest skyscraper the Burj Khalifa, four sources told Reuters, potentially raising \$1 billion for Dubai's biggest developer amid a real estate downturn.

Two of the sources said Emaar had appointed Standard Chartered to advise it on the sale of the popular "At The Top" tourist attraction.

Emaar, in which the Dubai government has a minority stake of 29.2%, and Standard Chartered declined to comment.

At over 828 metres, the Burj Khalifa is twice as tall as New York's Empire State Building and nearly three times the height of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

At The Top is a popular tourist destination in Dubai, which attracted 15.92 million overnight visitors in 2018.

The viewing decks make about 600-700

million dirhams (\$163-\$191 million) a year, a banking source said.

A financial source estimated they could be worth around \$1 billion.

The sales process began in November, both of these sources said, declining to be named as the deal is not public.

Dubai is a regional hub for tourism, foreign trade and business services, but has faced a slowing real estate market for most of the decade.

It set up a real estate planning commission in September to regulate projects and avoid competition between semi-government and private firms.

Emaar has been divesting hospitality related assets to finance existing operations and expansion, an industry source and a Dubai-based banker said.

Emaar hired Standard Chartered earlier this year for the sale of its district cooling business, and last year for the disposal of five hospitality assets, which were sold to Abu Dhabi National Hotels.

Indonesia to bring down threshold for import taxes on e-commerce goods

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesia will lower the threshold at which it begins to impose import taxes on consumer goods sold via e-commerce to just \$3, from \$75, to control purchases of cheap foreign products and protect small domestic firms, officials said on Monday.

Overseas shipments from e-commerce purchases jumped to nearly 50 million packages so far in 2019, compared with 19.6 million packages last year and 6.1 million the year before, with most of the goods coming from China, customs data showed.

"This is to protect firms who've been producing goods that are often traded in e-commerce, such as sandals, crafts, and handbags," said customs director general Heru Pambudi.

Under the new regulations, which will come into effect at the end of January 2020, foreign-produced textiles, clothes, bags, and shoes that cost a minimum of \$3 will be subject to a range of taxes with a total rate of 32.5 percent to 50 percent of their value, the official said.

For other products, the import taxes will be lowered from 27.5 percent-37.5 percent of their value to 17.5 percent, as applicable to any goods worth \$3.

Goods worth below \$3 will still be subject to some taxes, such as value-added tax, though the range would be lower, something that was not required before.

Pambudi told reporters this was in response to the demands of the general public and businesses, and will allow domestic goods to go "head to head" with foreign ones.

China to lower import tariffs from January

AFP, Beijing

Beijing will lower import tariffs on more than 850 products including frozen pork from next month, the finance ministry said Monday, as authorities battle a severe shortage of the meat staple.

China's pig industry has been hammered by African swine fever, which has led to the culling of more than a million animals, according to official statistics, and caused the price of pork to double.

Monday's announcement said tariffs on frozen pork will drop from 12 percent to eight percent from January 1.

The move does not appear to be linked to the bruising trade war between China and the US, which has seen Washington and Beijing exchanging levies on goods worth hundreds of billions of dollars, dragging on global growth.

However, Donald Trump retweeted two press reports on the tariff reduction Monday, without any additional comment, and the list includes many items that Chinese companies purchase from the US such as pork and tech goods.

And analysts said the move was an indication of China's desire to show it is opening up after this month's mini deal with the US to reduce some levies and work towards a wider pact.

"The move in lowering import tariffs reflects that the government wants to reaffirm its stance to the world on freer trade amid the trade war," Gary Ng, an economist at Natixis, said. "Domestically, lowering import tariffs are helpful in reducing business and consumer costs." The Tariff Commission of the State Council said in a statement that the changes will optimise "the trade structure and promote the high-quality development of the economy".

Levies will also be lowered on other foods such as fish, cheese and nuts, pharmaceuticals, parts for manufacturing smartphones and a range of chemical products. With China's pig herd down by about 40 percent, authorities have launched a plan to restore pork production to pre-swine fever levels by 2021.

Imports of meat reached a record high in November in China, Bloomberg News said, citing customs data that showed pork imports are up 151 percent from a year earlier.

From July 1, China will also further reduce tariffs on some technology products, the finance ministry said in a statement on its website. Those goods include printers, audio recorder parts and pacemakers.

Tariffs on certain types of satellite TV receivers will fall from 10 percent to

five percent, according to the ministry's statement.

Goods from countries including New Zealand, Peru, Costa Rica, Switzerland, Iceland, Australia, South Korea, and Pakistan will also be subject to even lower levies under re-negotiated trade agreements,

according to the statement.

Last week, China issued a list of US chemicals that will be exempted from import tariffs, including certain types of industrial glue and adhesives, industrial polymers and types of paraffin, which can be found in cosmetics and food.



REUTERS/FILE

The shipping container area of the Yangshan Port of Shanghai is seen.



BRAC BANK

Md Mahmudul Kabir, executive director for marketing at Building Technology & Ideas (bti), and Md Mahiul Islam, head of retail banking of Brac Bank, exchange the signed documents of a memorandum of understanding at bti Celebration Point last week for bti customers to get home loans at "a discounted interest rate and processing fee".



ANLIMA YARN DYEING

Hubbon Nahar Hoque, chairperson of Anlima Yarn Dyeing, attends its 24th annual general meeting on its Savar factory premises on Sunday when the annual accounts and directors' report were approved, a 5 percent cash dividend was declared and an auditor was appointed for 2019-20.

Christmas in Lebanon not so merry as economic crisis bites

REUTERS, Beirut

Rafi Tabakian's clothing store in a Beirut suburb is usually buzzing with customers during the holiday season, but with Lebanon's economy in ruins, shoppers are in short supply.

"We've been in business for 30 years, and I've never seen anything like this," he said, adding that sales have dropped 80 percent in December even though he has cut his prices.

"Now we see customers entering, asking for the price, and then leaving. It's scary," Tabakian, who produces and sells clothes in the densely populated, commercial Burj Hammoud neighbourhood of the capital, told Reuters.

Lebanon is suffering its worst economic crisis, rooted in decades of state corruption and waste, since the 1975-1990 civil war, leaving streets dimmer and shopping centres emptier, with many stores and restaurants void of customers.

The economic woes have sparked huge protests against the ruling elite, banks are imposing capital controls, pressure has piled on the pegged Lebanese pound, and a hard currency crunch has pushed importers to hike prices.

Hotel bookings, flights and events have plunged during what is usually a busy commercial season for Lebanon, which has the Arab world's biggest proportion of Christians.

Many from Lebanon's large diaspora normally return home to streets packed with cars and decked out with lights.

But Pierre Ashkar, the head of Lebanon's hotel association, said December bookings have plummeted from a usual 65-75 percent occupancy to 7-15 percent this year.

"Hotels have closed some parts of their buildings, are giving employees

said Raymond Atieh, head of the Jdeideh municipality, north of Beirut.

"The holidays are coming, but they're coming with a pinch. People are angry...People are getting fired, paid half-salaries, or not working," Atieh added.



REUTERS

Fireworks are set off in front of police officers standing in position behind riot shields during a protest at the Corniche al Mazzraa in Beirut, Lebanon on December 20.

unpaid leave and removing services such as free shuttle transportation to the airport to minimize losses." Some local councils have opted to either reuse old decorations or do without.

"We put up last year's decorations, without adding anything because these are exceptional circumstances,"

Charbel Daccache, a priest in Mount Lebanon's largely Christian town of Adma, said it was better to help feed the poor in tough times "than to decorate and throw glitter".

"Some days are harsh, others are better but it's not the end. That's why I tell people, let it be a joyous time."



NCC BANK

Md Nurun Newaz Salim, chairman of NCC Bank, inaugurates its 121st branch in Mohammadpur of Dhaka on Sunday.



ADVANCED CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES

M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI), presides over its 46th annual general meeting at Officers' Club in Dhaka yesterday. The company approved financial statements, auditors' and directors' reports and 100 percent cash and 15 percent stock dividends for the year ending on June 30, 2019.

Shams Mahmud new DCCI president

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shams Mahmud has been elected president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) for 2020.

Besides, NKA Mobin and Mohammad Bashiruddin were respectively elected senior vice president and vice president.

The new board of directors took over charge at the 58th annual general meeting of the chamber at its auditorium yesterday, said the chamber in a statement.

The newly elected directors are Arman Haque, Md Shahid Hossain, Md Zia Uddin, Monowar Hossain, and Shamsuzzoha Chowdhury. Mahmud is a leading entrepreneur in the textile and readymade garment sector in Bangladesh. He is the managing director of Shasha Denims, Shasha Garments, Shasha Spinning and Shasha Textiles.



Shams Mahmud

He is a director of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association and the Dutch-Bangla Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the vice-president of the Bangladesh-Philippines Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

He received national gold export trophies in 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 and won the highest export award by the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association in 2010-11.

Mobin is the managing director of Emerging Credit Rating Ltd, vice president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh and a director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Bashiruddin is involved in food and bakery business, agribusiness, real estate development, import and restaurant chain.

He is the managing director of Capital Agro Aqua Enterprise, Capital Siraj Centre Shopping Mall, and Canary and Digital Agro Industries. He is a director of Capital Confectionery, Capital Consortium and Bamboo Castle Fast Food Shop.



Md Sajedul Haque, deputy executive vice president of Reliance Insurance, receives a silver award on behalf of the insurer at the 6th ICSB National Award for Corporate Governance Excellence, 2018 at the Radisson Blu hotel in Dhaka on Saturday.

Boeing replaces its embattled CEO

AFP, New York

Boeing on Monday replaced its embattled chief executive, Dennis Muilenburg, saying a change was necessary as it attempts to restore its reputation amid the protracted 737 MAX crisis.

Boeing named board Chairman David Calhoun as chief executive and president, saying the company needed to "restore confidence" and "repair relationships with regulators, customers and all other stakeholders." The company pledged to "operate with a renewed commitment to full transparency, including effective and

proactive communication with the FAA, other global regulators and its customers." The aerospace giant's financial picture remains clouded following the global grounding of the MAX in March after two deadly crashes.

The move comes a week after Boeing took the monumental step of temporarily shutting down MAX production because of the crisis, which has pushed the aircraft's return to the skies into 2020.

Muilenburg will exit the company immediately but Calhoun, a former General Electric aviation executive, will not take the CEO post until January 13,

2020, while he exits existing commitments, Boeing said in a news release.

During that period, Chief Financial Officer Greg Smith will serve as interim CEO.

Muilenburg's response to the crisis has been increasingly criticized as the MAX grounding has dragged on far longer than initially expected as more disturbing details have dribbled out about the certification of the MAX.

He has also been seen as tone deaf and awkward towards families of the 346 people killed in the crashes.

After enduring two withering

congressional hearings in the fall, Muilenburg's leadership came under further scrutiny this month when the Federal Aviation Administration called the company out for overly-optimistic timeframe for restoring the MAX that the agency said created the perception that Boeing was trying "to force FAA into taking quicker action." Boeing shares jumped 3.4 percent to \$339.13 in early trading on the news.

The company took another hit to its reputation over on Sunday when its Starliner spacecraft landed six days early after a failed mission to rendezvous with the International Space Station.

Oil prices fall as Russia touts easing Opec+ output

REUTERS, London

Oil fell on Monday after Russia said an Opec-led pact may consider easing output cuts next year but prices held near recent three-month highs on hopes for a trade deal between the United States and China.

Brent crude LCOc1 was down 19 cents, or 0.29%, at \$65.95 per barrel by 1010 GMT in thin trading ahead of the Christmas holiday. West Texas Intermediate CLc1 was down 29 cents, or 0.48%, at \$60.15 a barrel.

The Organization of the Petroleum

Exporting Countries and other top producing nations led by Russia agreed this month to extend and deepen output cuts in the first quarter of 2020.

However, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Monday that the group known as Opec+ may consider easing the output restrictions at their meeting in March.

"We can consider any options, including gradual easing of quotas, including continuation of the deal," Novak told Russia's RBC TV in an interview recorded last week, adding

that Russia's oil output was set to hit a record high this year.

Non-Opec global supply is expected to rise next year due to higher output from countries including the United States, Brazil, Norway and Guyana, which became an oil producer last week.

Another source of more oil could emerge in the coming months after Kuwait indicated that a long-standing dispute over the "Neutral Zone" on its border with Saudi Arabia will resolve by the end of 2019.

Production at two large oil fields in

the Neutral Zone was halted more than three years ago, cutting output by some 500,000 barrels per day.

Oil prices have risen since the United States and China agreed a so-called phase one trade deal earlier this month following months of tit-for-tat negotiations that unsettled markets.

Under a deal due to be signed in January, the United States is expected to agree to reduce some tariffs in return for a big increase in purchases of US agricultural products by Chinese importers.

Advance income tax cut for import of cement raw materials

FROM PAGE B1

Of the imports, clinker accounted for \$900 million, Ikram Ahmed Khan, managing director of Shun Shing Group, Hong Kong, told The Daily Star recently.

According to the BCMA, the industry sold 26.2 million tonnes of cement from January to October in 2019, up 15.69 percent year-on-year.

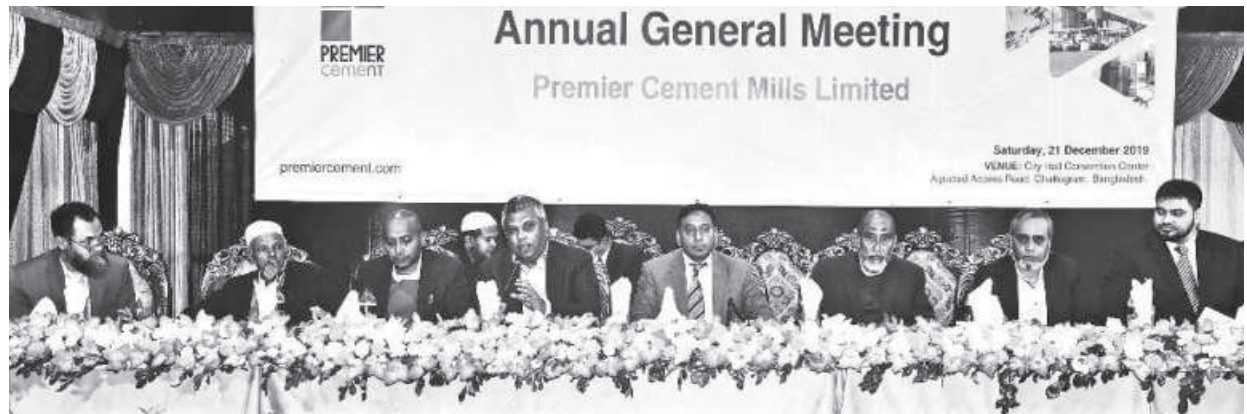
Overproduction has created an unhealthy competition in the sector, which is another troubling issue for the manufacturers, according to Kabir,

also the vice-chairman of Crown Cement.

There are 37 active cement factories in Bangladesh who have so far invested over Tk 30,000 crore, he said.

The factories' combined production capacity is 58 million tonnes a year against a demand of 33 million tonnes.

The sector's annual sales are worth around \$3 billion, or Tk 25,500 crore. Of the consumption, individuals use 25 percent, realtors and developers 30 percent, and the public sector 45 percent, BCMA data showed.



Mohammad Mustafa Haider, chairman of Premier Cement Mills, chairs its 17th annual general meeting at City Hall Convention Center in Chattogram on Saturday when a 10 percent cash dividend was approved for the year ending on June 30, 2019.



Experts attend a discussion on "the opportunities and challenges of innovation in the traditional RMG business model" organised by Merchant Bay, an internet start-up, at Banani Club in Dhaka yesterday. They said the key problems of the sector are unplanned expansion of factories, unavailability of skilled employees, and efficiency loss.

Tesla, Apple among firms accused of aiding child labour in Congo

REUTERS, New York

Five of the world's largest tech companies have been accused of being complicit in the death of children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) forced to mine cobalt, a metal used to make telephones and computers, in a landmark lawsuit.

The legal complaint on behalf of 14 families from Congo was filed on Sunday by International Rights Advocates, a US-based human rights non-profit, against Tesla Inc, Apple Inc, Alphabet Inc, Microsoft Corp and Dell Technologies Inc.

The companies were part of a system of forced labour that the families claimed led to the death and serious injury of their children, it said. It marked the first time the tech industry jointly has faced legal action over the source of its cobalt.

Images in the court documents, filed in US District Court in Washington DC, showed children with disfigured or missing limbs.

Employees see red as BASIC slashes salaries

FROM PAGE B1

"When hundreds of crores of taka was plundered from the bank the employees did nothing," he added.

At BASIC an officer draws gross salary of about Tk 40,000, whereas the other state-run banks' officers get Tk 30,000.

A senior officer at BASIC enjoys a gross amount of about Tk 50,000, when the same category officer in other state-run banks get Tk 40,000.

One of the best performing banks until 2009, things took a turn for the worst when the present government came to power and appointed Abdul Hye Bacchu as its chairman.

Bacchu siphoned off more than Tk 4,500 crore from the bank between 2010 and 2013 in collaboration with

a section of high officials and board members. Defaulted loans in the bank escalated in recent years, forcing the lender to face a large amount of provisioning shortfall as well.

The bank has also faced capital shortfall in recent years, which compelled the government to inject funds to rescue it.

Alauddin A Majid, chairman of BASIC Bank, told The Daily Star that the agitation carried out by the employees is quite illogical as the bank has adjusted its salary structure in line with other state lenders.

"The bank has been facing losses for the last seven to eight years. So how is it possible to pay a larger salary than the other state-run banks?"

As of September this year, default

loans in BASIC stood at Tk 8,738 crore, which is 58.62 percent of its outstanding loans.

Another BASIC Bank official said that the demonstrators withdrew their programme at 6.30pm when the management of the bank assured them of reconsidering their demand at the next board meeting.

"Only a fraction of the people are involved in scams, so why should we bear the brunt? The latest decision will have an adverse impact on our lifestyle. We will face difficulties in managing our expenses."

Majid, however, said the new salary scale will affect the deputy general managers and above; from assistant general managers and below it is not much different.

Weak economy cuts number of South African companies paying tax

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Nearly half of companies in South Africa had no taxable income in 2017 while a quarter recorded a taxable loss, the South African Revenue service said on Monday, based on its latest 2017/18 data, highlighting the impact of weak economic growth.

The revenue service said based on its 2017 data, 48.3 percent of companies had taxable income equal to zero, 27.4 percent reported an assessed loss, and 24.3 percent had positive taxable income. Companies have up to 12 months from the end of their financial cycles to submit tax returns.

"The decline can largely be attributed to sluggish economic growth, structural challenges in some sectors of the economy, low confidence levels and political uncertainty," the revenue service said.

"All of these factors play a role in subdued investment activity, resulting in lower profitability for companies."

In the revenue service's 2019 Tax Statistics, which measures revenue collection from 2014/15 to 2018/19 fiscal years, revenue collection for the current year ended March reached 1.287 trillion rand (\$90.25 billion), short of a target of 1.302 trillion rand.

The collector said companies submitting returns had fallen 36.9 percent to just over 2 million for the 2018/19 fiscal year, partly due to many being considered "inactive or dormant", while only 63.4 percent, or 572,000, of companies expected to submit returns had complied.

Tax revenues have fallen sharply in South Africa since 2015 due to weak economic growth and maladministration. In addition, nationwide electricity blackouts, forcing mines and small businesses to shut down, have put more pressure on the economy and government finances.

In October, the National Treasury said the budget deficit would jump to 5.9 percent of gross domestic product by 2020, its highest since 2009/10, and likely reach a 6.5 percent deficit in 2021, well above government's target of 4.5 percent.

DSEX sinks below 4,400 points

FROM PAGE B1

Foreign investors mostly hold blue-chip stocks which fell on a greater extent in the past few months, said a stock broker.

The DS30, the DSE's blue-chip index, fell 7.05 points to 1494.54, a six-year low, according to the DSE data.

The stock broker said although the finance minister had assured that the local currency would not be devalued, foreign investors have continued selling their stakes apprehending a disruption in the country's macroeconomic stability.

A merchant banker said most of the institutional investors were not investing money and had adopted a wait-and-see approach. So, the market is not getting any support, he said, adding that general investors would regain their confidence

once the market starts to rise.

Turnover, another important indicator of the market, also fell 2.8 percent to Tk 263.48 crore.

Square Pharmaceuticals topped the turnover list with shares worth Tk 11.58 crore being traded, followed by Khulna Power Company, Golden Harvest, Gramophone and Beacon Pharmaceuticals.

Of the traded issues, 68 advanced, 234 dropped and 52 remained unchanged.

Chittagong stocks also fell with the bourse's benchmark index, the CSCX, declining 58.58 points, or 0.71 percent.

Losers beat gainers as 151 securities declined, 56 advanced and 32 finished unchanged on Chittagong Stock Exchange.

The port city bourse traded shares and mutual fund units amounting to Tk 9.30 crore.



Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazole Kabir inaugurates an online real-time core banking solution at Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (Rakub) at its Rajshahi head office last week.

Incepta on a roll

Man behind the pharma company's 20-year-old success story sees a remarkable leap in global market by local companies within 10 years

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN And AHSAN HABIB

WHEN Abdul Muktaadir decided to set up a pharmaceutical company to manufacture high-quality and advanced drugs, his relatives and close family members did not accept without objecting, because he had already been well-settled and had earned fame in the industry. "Everybody objected that it will not be a wise decision to leave such a good position," he said, recollecting his decision to step down from the position of chief operating officer of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd. But Muktaadir, who studied pharmacy at the University of Dhaka and industrial pharmacy at Long Island University in the US and was 15 years in the field already, was confident that the company would be successful.

He clearly saw the opportunity for such a company that would produce high-quality and advanced drugs for the growing market at home and abroad.

"The growth potential of Bangladesh offered the courage and hope. We had strongly believed at the time that Bangladesh has a tremendous future. That belief has gradually materialised."

His conviction proved right and within eight years of inception of Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd, the company Muktaadir founded in 1999 with financial backing from Impress Group, a garments and media conglomerate, to become the second-largest medicine-maker in Bangladesh.

From the beginning, Incepta has focused on rolling out newer and innovative products. High investment in research and development and advanced technology has allowed the company to launch 455 generics with 843 presentations, 167 of which were "first" in Bangladesh.

Today, Incepta and its sister concerns manufacture human vaccines, monoclonal antibodies, biotech products, hormones, natural products, animal health products, hygiene products, and hospital devices.

"We are just crossing 20 years of operation. This has been a wonderful time for us and we have been able to succeed in every sphere of our activities," said Muktaadir, who is the chairman and managing director of



Abdul Muktaadir

the company.

As he had been in the marketing department of Beximco for such a long time, he was well-known in the medical community, and the professional upbringing helped him in steering the company in the right direction.

He also credited a government policy that allowed companies to go for US dollar borrowing at a very low cost.

"We utilised this particular facility and imported machinery and raw materials at lower cost. This was an excellent example of how a government policy can provide support to a growing industry."

Incepta's dramatic ascent coincided with the expansion of the domestic pharma market thanks to rising per capita income and people's access to health care, helped by steady economic growth of the country.

Once heavily dependent on imported medicines, Bangladesh is now self-sufficient with 98 percent of all medicines being locally made, whereas the local industry used to meet 15 to 20 percent of the demand in 1985.

"You can imagine how much progress the industry has made. Medicines are being exported to 130 countries. And you are only watching a tip of the iceberg."

"The progress will come to such an extent that Bangladesh will be known as a producer of high quality medicines for the world. This is going to be one of the identities of Bangladesh."

The entrepreneur said it would take six to 10 years for the local industry to make the next big jump and the top 10 companies are gearing up for this by putting in place right technologies, human resources and capacities and international connections.

Diversification has put Incepta on a strong footing. It started overseas marketing operation in May 2006 and is currently exporting products to 67 countries.

With hundreds of brands registered in different countries, and many more in the pipeline, Incepta is gradually expanding its global footprint across all the continents.

The western world is a major pharmaceutical market for now.

But with economic progress in China, India and other emerging countries in Latin America and Africa, the emerging market is also big, according to Muktaadir.

"Incepta is active in both developed markets and the emerging markets."

The country's Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) Industrial Park has just started and he thinks within two to three years, the country is going to be almost self-sufficient in this area. Now 90 percent of the APIs, the active component of any medicine that produces its effects, are imported.

Incepta is going to start producing APIs and plans are underway to get into reverse engineering and analogue research in order to produce new APIs.

Speaking about entrepreneurship, he said an entrepreneur needs to have patriotism, take risk, and work hard.

"This is a work involving 24 hours. You have to constantly think how to do things well. Only then you can succeed. And you have to be thoroughly honest in your life and ensure quality. Otherwise, success

would be very, very short-lived."

He said no pharmaceutical business would succeed until and unless it benefits patients. "If we can bring in new products, people will accept it. That's how we have progressed."

"We all thought this is possible and we tried and it started happening. There is nothing extraordinary. If you try hard, it comes naturally."

Asked about any plan to go public, he said the stock market does not offer much advantage at this moment. The companies who were listed have to be more focused on profits and stock prices, compared to their core business.

"This distracts entrepreneurs from their core business. So, we would try to remain private as long as possible."

He said the core competency of any nation will depend on its abilities in innovation, science, and technology.

"So, it is extremely dissatisfying for me to see our younger generation are not studying pure sciences as much as they should."

He urged the current generation to concentrate more on science so that the country can be built on innovation and technology.

Incepta is active in many when it comes to corporate social responsibility, but Muktaadir wants to keep these activities rather private.

"This is something we would like to do in a humble manner. But at certain point in time, we would like to, if possible, plough back virtually everything to the society."

Although the local market has expanded hugely, exports have not accelerated as expected. Medicine exports fetched \$130 million last fiscal year.

"The country needs to support pharmaceutical companies in such a manner with positivity and hand-holding that it becomes a world-class supplier to the whole world," Muktaadir said.

He applauded the government for announcing the pharmaceutical "Product of the Year" for 2018 and giving 10 percent incentive for formulation product and 20 percent incentive for API.

"I would say all correct policies are there and we have to take it forward. Then we can make this industry a fantastic one."

The industry is not without

limitations or challenges.

He called for bringing down duties on the imports of items used in manufacturing APIs and other chemicals consumed by the industry.

The government should come up with fiscal measures to encourage making machinery or equipment used in the pharmaceuticals sector locally in order to cut reliance on imports.

A company of Incepta produces machines used in pharmaceutical manufacturing in a joint venture machine manufacturing company with a Swiss and a German partner.

He said the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) is giving Bangladeshi companies a lot of flexibilities and freedom to explore patented molecules. But by 2024, there would be some challenges.

"I think we can continue to enjoy this until 2027. That's not a long time. We have to utilise the facility as quickly as possible to maximise the benefit."

"By the time the facilities expire, the country and the industry would be on a firm footing and it would sustain and continue to grow," said Muktaadir, also a senior vice president of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries.

The company employs 10,000 people now and looks to become such a company within seven to 10 years where 50,000 people will be working.

Incepta Pharmaceuticals has been awarded the National Export Trophy for export excellence for four consecutive years, starting from 2013-14.

The company has intensified its focus to become a major player in supplying generic medicines to global markets, including highly regulated countries, and is emphasising backward integration so that products can be manufactured with full reliability of quality and cost.

The entrepreneur said Incepta has been growing at a reasonably good pace since its inception.

"We will see more growth in future. I think within four to five years, there would be hardly any country where Incepta's medicines will not be available."

"Our fellow companies are also working to go outside Bangladesh. And when we collectively succeed, Bangladesh will become a hub for the low-cost, high-quality medicines."

Tesla to take new \$1.4b loan from Chinese banks for Shanghai factory

REUTERS, Beijing/Shanghai

US electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc and a group of China banks have agreed a new 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion), five-year loan facility for the automaker's Shanghai car plant, three sources familiar with the matter said, part of which will be used to roll over an existing loan.

China Construction Bank (CCB), Agricultural Bank of China (AgBank), Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and Shanghai Pudong Development Bank (SPDB) are

among the banks which have agreed to give Tesla the financial support, one source with direct knowledge said.

The Chinese banks earlier this year already offered Tesla a 12-month facility of up to 3.5 billion yuan, which is due to be repaid on March 4, 2020, according to a filing the automaker made to the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

That new loan will be partially used to roll over the previous 3.5 billion yuan debt, according to the first source. The second source said

the rest will be used on the factory and Tesla's China operations.

The new loan's interest rate will be pegged at 90% of China's one-year benchmark interest rate, the same as the 3.5 billion yuan loan, the first source said. This is a rate that China banks offer to their best clients.

Tesla, CCB, AgBank, ICBC and SPDB did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

Tesla broke ground on the factory in January and has started producing vehicles from its Shanghai plant. It aims to build at

least 1,000 Model 3 cars a week by the end of this year.

The factory, which is Tesla's first car manufacturing site outside the United States, is the centerpiece of its ambitions to boost sales in the world's biggest auto market and avoid higher import tariffs imposed on US-made cars.

The Shanghai government has also thrown its support behind the Tesla project, which would be China's first wholly foreign-owned car plant and a reflection of the government's broader shift to open up its car market.



REUTERS

A Christmas tree stands lit at Rockefeller Center in Manhattan, New York City.

The Yankees are coming! US firms rush to euro debt markets

REUTERS, London

FROM Harley Davidson to Colgate-Palmolive, US companies are flocking to borrow in euros and their record issuance is breathing life into a market where yields have been hammered by the European Central Bank's renewed stimulus push.

Offshore fundraising by US firms — dubbed the "reverse Yankee" in reference to Yankee bonds, which are sold by foreign entities in the United States — has been a regular feature of the euro debt market. But issuance by non-financial, investment-grade US firms has quadrupled this year from 2018 levels, to around 93 billion euros (\$103 billion), Dealogic data shows.

That accounted for 27 percent of a total 346 billion euros (\$383 billion) of euro-denominated investment-grade corporate bond issuance, according to the data.

From pharmaceuticals to consumer goods makers to fintech, the reverse Yankee has become the



REUTERS/FILE

US and European Union flags are pictured during a visit by US Vice President Mike Pence to the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

go-to market for US companies which are now the largest source of corporate bond sales in Europe, according to BofA.

And if the boom extends into 2020, the United States would

become the largest country in the ICE-BofA euro zone corporate debt index, overtaking France, the bank says.

The rush is driven primarily by rock-bottom borrowing costs in

the euro zone, where interest rates are at minus 0.5 percent and the average yield on corporate euro-denominated bonds has fallen to 0.48 percent — down from 1.25 percent at the start of 2019.

European credit markets offer "the best funding conditions for global issuers" said BofA's head of credit strategy Barnaby Martin. "They're not going to be able to find that anywhere else."

Euro issuance allows US borrowers to replace high-coupon, shorter-dated dollar debt with longer, lower-coupon euro debt. That lowers financing costs and improves the results of companies with euro-denominated assets, said Marc Baigueres, head of Western Europe investment-grade finance at JPMorgan.

Mergers and acquisitions are another factor — fintech Fidelity National Information Services, for example, raised 5 billion euros back in May as part of a multi-currency deal to finance its purchase of card payment firm Worldpay.

From tinsel to turkey, shoppers dream of a 'guilt-free' Christmas

REUTERS, London

MENSTRUAL cups or wormeries may not top everyone's Christmas wish lists but with the rising tide of anti-consumerism, ethical businesses are hoping to boost sales this year.

Nearly two-thirds of consumers globally prefer to buy from companies that reflect their personal values, according to research firm Accenture.

Social enterprises or businesses set up to tackle environmental or social problems such as homelessness or waste see this as an opportunity to cash in at this time of year.

"Any social product is removing the guilt from purchase, which is really the big problem of consumerism that guilty feeling," Dave Linton, founder of luggage social enterprise Madlug, told the Thompson Reuters Foundation.

Based in Armagh, Northern Ireland, the business was founded in 2015 to give bags to children in the care system bags to move their belongings between homes rather than using bin bags.

Madlug operates a buy-one-give-one model, with a piece of luggage given to a child or homeless person with every purchase.

"People are making choices, more and more, that if they're going to spend

something then why not spend and make a difference," he said.

Whether it is renting Christmas trees, making decorations at home, buying experiences over objects, or choosing to forgo gifts altogether, attitudes towards gifts are shifting.

Almost a third of British consumers said they bought presents with lower environmental impact last year, while 38% said they thought it was important to buy ethically-sourced gifts, according to data from consumer research company Mintel.

About two thirds of consumers felt it was the retailers' responsibility to promote gifts with less waste.

"As people are becoming more aware of the toll mass consumerism can have on the environment, there is a push towards adopting less wasteful Christmas habits," Chana Baram, senior retail analyst at Mintel. "Even though, for the most part, people will continue to partake in holiday purchasing, it is important for retailers and brands to encourage more ethical consumption." For retailers whose business models are based on selling as much stock as possible and creating desire through marketing, this change in attitudes can present a challenge.