GPH ISPAT

Saiful Islam, vice-chancellor of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology; Fahmida Gulshan, chairman of the Department of Materials and Metallurgical Engineering, Md Alamgir Kabir, chairman of GPH Ispat, and Mohammed Jahangir Alam, managing director, attend a deal signing ceremony between the department and the company at the university's auditorium in Dhaka recently on mutual cooperation on research and innovation. The company handed over a universal testing machine to BUET.

China's industrial profits grow at fastest in eight months

REUTERS, *Beijing*

Profits at China's industrial firms grew at the fastest pace in eight months in November, but broad weakness in domestic demand remains a risk for company earnings next year.

China's industrial sector has faced persistent pressure in the past year, with manufacturers battling sluggish demand and a profit-denting trade dispute with the United States. But recent factory activity surveys have pointed to a nascent recovery in the manufacturing sector, following Beijing's accelerated stimulus measures to steady growth.

Industrial profits in November rose 5.4 percent from a year earlier to 593.9 billion yuan ($84.93 billion), snapping three months of decline, as production and sales quickened, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Friday. That compared with a 9.9 percent drop in October.

For January-November, industrial firms notched profits of 5.61 trillion yuan, down 2.1 percent from a year earlier, but slightly better than a 2.9 percent fall in the first 10 months.

The expansion was mostly due to quickening production and sales, while factory-gate prices contracted at a slower pace, said Zhu Hong, an official with the statistics bureau in a statement released alongside the data.

But he cautioned that the rebound may not be an indication of a sustained recovery.

"Although the profit growth turned to positive in November, we have to see that the current downward pressure on the economy is still big, and the volatility and uncertainty of profit growth still exist due to multiple factors such as market demand and industrial prices."

In November, profits at state-owned industrial firms rose 0.6 percent from a year earlier, reversing a declining trend since the second half this year, while private sector profits also posted a significant acceleration in growth.

Among sectors, the chemical, petroleum processing and steel industries reported recovering profits last month due to rebounding market demand and rising prices.

"We expect the surge in industrial profit growth to be just short-lived, given strong growth headwinds and still-elevated uncertainty amid US-China trade tensions," analysts at Nomura said in a report after the data.

"In our view, Beijing will likely continue to roll out moderate easing measures amid limited policy room."

The upbeat figures come amid patchy recoveries in industrial output against broad weakness in demand at home and abroad. Industrial production rose at the fastest clip in five months in November amid easing trade hostilities with Washington, but exports continued to hover in the contractionary zone.

China and the United States cooled their 17-month long trade war earlier this month, announcing a Phase 1 agreement that would reduce some US tariffs in exchange for more Chinese purchases of American farm products.

Analysts said the deal could boost China's export activity and corporate investment in the near term, but its economic outlook would continue to be challenged by lackluster global growth. US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he and Chinese President Xi Jinping will have a ceremony to sign the first phase trade deal agreed to this month.

China's economy is expanding at the slowest pace in nearly 30 years and could face greater downward pressure next year, but policymakers have vowed more support to stabilize growth and prevent risks.

Turkey unveils first fully homemade car in $3.7b bet on electric

REUTERS, *Istanbul*

Turkey unveiled its first fully domestically-produced car on Friday, saying it aimed to eventually produce up to 175,000 a year of the electric vehicle in a project expected to cost 22 billion lira ($3.7 billion) over 13 years.

The project has been a long-time goal of President Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AK Party as a demonstration of the country's growing economic power.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Erdogan said Turkey aimed not only to sell the car domestically but also wanted it to become a global brand, starting with Europe.

"We're all together witnessing Turkey's 60-year-old dream become reality," he said, referring to failed plans in the past to build a fully home-produced car. "When we see this car on roads around the whole world, we will have reached our goal." Following his speech, a red SUV model of the car and another grey sedan one were raised onto the stage, sporting the TOGG label of the consortium that is building them.

Erdogan said the charging infrastructure for electric cars would be ready nationwide by 2022. Turkey is already a big exporter to Europe of cars made domestically by firms such as Ford, Fiat Chrysler , Renault, Toyota and Hyundai .

The new project, launched in October, will receive state support such as tax breaks, and establish a production facility in the automotive hub of Bursa in northwest Turkey, according to a presidential decision in the country's Official Gazette.

Five models of the car will be produced, the statement said, adding the government had guaranteed to buy 30,000 of the vehicles by 2035.

India's internet shutdowns costing telcos millions of rupees in lost revenue

REUTERS, *New Delhi*

Indian mobile operators are losing around 24.5 million rupees ($350,000) in revenue every hour they are forced to suspend internet services on government orders to control protests against a new citizenship law, a top lobby group said on Friday.

Countrywide protests have raged for three weeks after parliament passed legislation which gives minorities from neighbouring Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh a path to citizenship but excludes Muslims.

That, coupled with a plan for a national register of citizens, are seen by critics as anti-Muslim moves by the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

To quell protests, government has deployed thousands of police as well intermittently ordered mobile data shutdowns at a time people have used social media such as Instagram and TikTok to wage a parallel battle online. Such internet suspensions have been criticised by internet freedom activists.

On Friday, mobile internet was ordered shut in at least 18 districts in northern Uttar Pradesh state, a telecoms industry source told Reuters.

A Reuters witness received a text message from an internet service provider announcing that home broadband services on the outskirts of capital New Delhi will be unavailable for 24 hours, till the morning of Dec 28.

Indians consume an average 9.8 gigabyte of data per month on their smartphones, the highest in the world, according to Swedish telecoms gearmaker Ericsson. The country is the biggest market by users for social media firm Facebook and its messenger WhatsApp.

Internet shutdowns should not be first course of action, said the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which counts mobile carriers Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Industries' Jio Infocomm as its members.

"We've highlighted the cost of these shutdowns," COAI director general Rajan Mathews told Reuters. "According to our computation at the end of 2019, with the increase in online activities we believe the cost (of internet shutdowns) is close to 24.5 million rupees for an hour of internet shutdown."

The revenue losses will pile on to the woes of India's telecoms sector, bruised by a price war and saddled with a combined $13 billion in overdue payments following a Supreme Court ruling in October.

Bharti, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Jio did not respond to emails seeking comment.

REUTERS/FILE

Commuters watch videos on their mobile phones as they travel in a suburban train in Mumbai.

The bans follows an unprecedented shutdown of internet and text messaging services in parts of Delhi last week, widening a communications clampdown in restive areas stretching from disputed Kashmir to the northeast.

Internet services in Indian Kashmir were suspended for over 140 days since New Delhi relegated its status to a federal administered territory from a state, making it the longest such shutdown in a democracy, according to digital rights group Access Now.

MRDI

Sheikh Afil Uddin, a lawmaker, Md Ashanur Rahman, chief economist and country business manager of City Bank, and Hasibur Rahman, executive director of the Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), hand over a bicycle to a school girl at Basatpur in Jashore. Forty-one girls received bicycles under a corporate social responsibility initiative of the bank and the MRDI. The initiative has been implemented by local daily Gramer Kagoj.

PRAN

Eleash Mridha, managing director at Pran Group, speaks at press conference at the Pran Center in the capital's Badda on Saturday to launch the company's campaign -- Chorai Bhalobashar Ushnota Season-2 -- to help the cold-hit poor people and raise public awareness on used plastic bottles.

Recession, robots and rockets: another roaring 20s for world markets?

REUTERS, *London*

Helicopter cash, climate crises, smart cities and the space economy -- investors have all those possibilities ahead as they enter the third decade of the 21st century.

They go into the new decade with a spring in their step, after watching world stocks add over $25 trillion in value in the past 10 years and a bond rally put $13 trillion worth of bond yields below zero.

They also saw internet-based firms transform the way humans work, shop and relax. Now investors are positioning for the tech revolution's next 10 years.

Could we see a repeat of the roaring twenties, as the 1920s were known -- years of prosperity, technological innovation and such social developments as women winning the right to vote? Possibly. But there's unease, along with all the euphoria. The current economic cycle is already the longest in US history and a recession looks inevitable in the new decade -- which also will mark 100 years since the Wall Street crash of 1929.

And solutions may need to be unconventional, even more so than the extraordinary policies of negative interest rates and bond-buying that eased the post-2008 global funk.

With those policies maxed out, "in the 2020s it seems inevitable that a world of helicopter money awaits," Deutsche Bank predicts.

That would entail central banks or governments providing citizens with large amounts of money, as though it was being dropped from helicopters, a strategy rejected even by the unorthodox policymakers of the 2010s. Another radical option under discussion is modern monetary theory, when governments create and spend as much money as needed, so long as inflation stays low.

"Central banks have effectively invited governments to experiment with more unconventional policies," Deutsche said. However, those policies may pile up even more global debt, already at record highs.

So what will markets do? A decade of rock-bottom interest rates didn't revive growth and inflation in developed nations, but they certainly inflated markets, as prices for bonds, equities and real estate show.

The inequality they spawned have also triggered a widespread backlash which must cease in OECD nations by 2030 for the Paris Agreement to be met.

BofA expects clean energy and electric-vehicle companies to emerge as winners, estimating the clean energy market to be already worth $300 billion.

Ageing populations are another challenge, making demographics a

REUTERS/FILE

Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange, US.

against globalisation. The result is a de-globalising world, or as Morgan Stanley puts it, "slow-balisation".

The bank expects tech investments to outperform, in particular smaller internet firms in China, as protectionism hurts larger rivals.

But it predicts less exciting returns -- "a lower and flatter frontier compared to prior decades, and especially compared to the ten years post-GFC (global financial crisis)."

As market returns cool, the planet will continue to heat up. Carbon emissions, temperatures, sea levels and thus climate-induced poverty and immigration are expected to rise.

That should increasingly lead asset managers to seek alternatives to pollutants, especially coal, use of key investment criterion. Deutsche Bank names Ireland, Rwanda, Ghana, Botswana and Laos as among the 22 nations in line for a "demographic dividend", benefiting from growing working-age populations.

It also backed sectors like e-commerce as Generation Z, those who will be in their mid 20s to early 30s by 2030, exercise growing spending power. But in some countries, affluent older spenders will still carry clout. By 2030, over 80s will represent 5.4 percent of the US population, up from 3.7 percent in 2015, driving demand for retirement homes, healthcare and long-life innovations.

"Immortality may prove the most interesting secular theme in the 2020s," BofA predicts.