

# The changing face of solar power

SUMAN SAHA

**J**APAN Solartech (Bangladesh) Ltd aims to bring in energy-efficient home appliances run by solar power for the local market at reasonable prices as it will help the county mitigate electricity crisis.

The company has already introduced DC (direct current) appliances, which are low powered, such as televisions, refrigerators, monitors, bulbs, fans and solar lanterns for the local market. Only 60 watts are needed to run an 18.5 inch LCD (liquid-crystal display) television and it has introduced a number of LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs that consume electricity from 1 watt to 12 watts.

"We are working to bring energy efficient products from Japan, as

saving energy is important, especially for energy starved Bangladesh," said Manabu Takeuchi, adviser to Japan Solartech.

He said, "Saving energy means generating energy."

Japan Solartech, established in January last year, is a joint venture between UJING Corporation, a unit of Japan's U-TEC Group, and Trade Service International, a trading company and distributor of TOTAL Lubricants in Bangladesh.

The company has already set up a factory in Chittagong to make solar batteries. It would start manufacturing solar batteries in March, eyeing the local market and exports, said Takeuchi.

He said the factory will make around 10,000 solar gel batteries a

month. The batteries will be produced by using the advanced non-material silica gel, which will give the batteries a longer life and help run smoothly at high and low temperatures.

"We will sell the products not only in Bangladesh, but also in other places, and gradually move to the developed countries," Takeuchi told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

Takeuchi, who has an MSc degree in applied physics from Tokyo Institute of Technology in Japan, recently came to Dhaka to attend an international conference on the developments in renewable energy technology.

Currently, the company is conducting a market research to launch the newly developed SHS-TV (solar home system TV) in Bangladesh. The TV has a one-box control unit, which eliminates the burden of complex connections as seen in conventional systems.

The new system will require only three components -- solar panel, control box and a battery to operate the system. The one-box control unit would be easy to operate and have higher charging capacity.

Takeuchi, who is the director for new technology development group of U-TEC, said they are working on thin-film solar and organic solar cells to manufacture the next generation solar products.

He said the organic solar cells can be installed at any place and on any structure as it is considerably light and flexible. It is also less expensive as the system requires low initial installation costs, which is almost a fifth of the conventional system.

Takeuchi, a former professor at the electrical and electronic engineering department at Ibaraki University in Japan, said traditional silicon-based



Manabu Takeuchi

solar panels currently dominate the market with a 90 percent share.

Even after more than 50 years of research and development, the silicon-based panels fail to achieve commercial success due to the exorbitant costs of silicon and difficulties associated with manufacturing the panels, he added.

"We are working to develop the thin-film solar cells through a coating process to address the constraints in silicon-based solar panels," said Takeuchi.

On the prospect of renewable energy, he said Bangladesh has immense prospects in green technology, as around half the population is still off-grid.

Around 80 million people, mostly living in rural areas, have no access to the national power grid. So, solar power systems could be a sustainable

solution, he added.

"The sunshine-hour is also favourable in the country to run solar panels as it has longer periods of sunshine compared to Japan. The average sunshine is 5.5 hours in this country, while it is 3.5 hours in Japan."

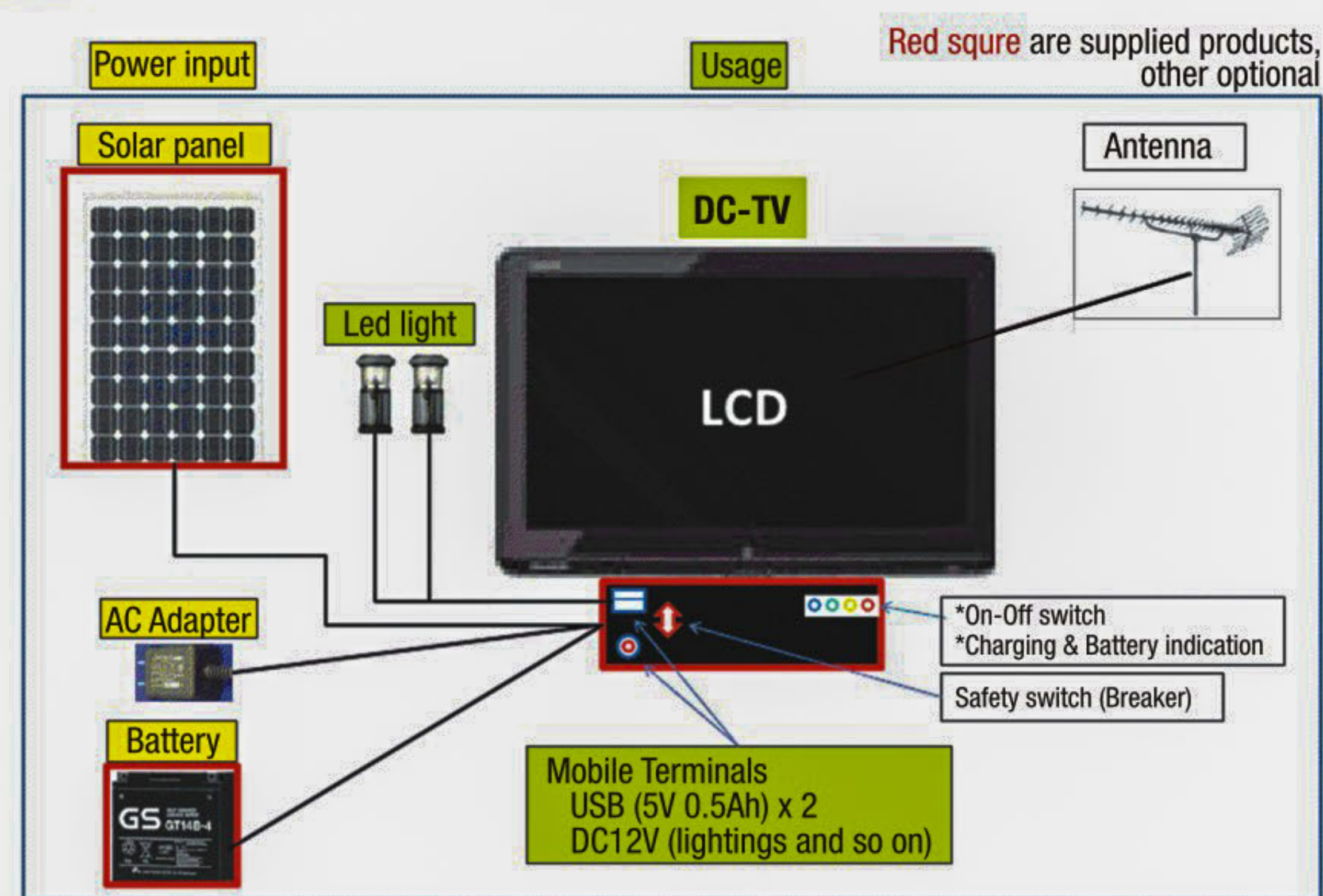
He said Japan Solartech will be a hub for manufacturing solar energy products and energy-efficient home appliances in this region.

The company recently installed its first hybrid (5KW) solar power system at the Gulshan branch office of EXIM Bank.

Established in 1942, U-TEC is now producing more than eight million solar modules, equivalent to around 200 MW, every year in its factories in Japan and China with an annual turnover of \$ 6.52 billion.

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## New SHS-LCD TV System



# Yahoo co-founder Yang resigns

REUTERS, San Francisco

**Y**AHOO Inc co-founder Jerry Yang has quit the company he started in 1995, appeasing shareholders who had blasted the Internet pioneer for pursuing an ineffective personal vision and impeding investment deals that could have transformed the struggling company.

Yang's abrupt departure comes two weeks after Yahoo appointed Scott Thompson its new CEO, with a mandate to return the once-leading Internet portal to the heights it enjoyed in the 1990s.

Wall Street views the exit of "Chief Yahoo" Yang as smoothing the way for a major infusion of cash from private equity, or a deal to sell off much of its 40 percent slice of China's Alibaba, unlocking value for shareholders.

Shares of Yahoo gained 3 percent in after-hours trade.

"Everyone is going to assume this means a deal is more likely with the Asia counterparts," Macquarie analyst Ben Schacter said. "The perception among shareholders was Jerry was more focused on trying to rebuild Yahoo than necessarily on maximizing near-term shareholder value."

"It certainly seems things are coming to a head as far as realizing the value of these assets."

Yang, who is severing all formal ties with the company by resigning all positions including his seat on the board of directors, has come under fire for his handling of company affairs dating back to an aborted sale to Microsoft in 2008.

Yang's exit comes roughly a month before dissident shareholders can nominate rival directors to Yahoo's board.

The remaining nine members of Yahoo's board, which includes Hewlett-Packard executive Vyomesh Joshi and private investor Gary Wilson, are all up for

reelection this year.

Yang's departure could be part of a broader board shakeup, said Ryan Jacob, chairman and chief investment officer of Jacob Funds, which owns Yahoo shares.

"If they don't move quickly on these things, they run the risk of a proxy battle and they are doing everything they can to avoid that."

The company did not say where Yang was headed or why he had suddenly resigned. CEO Thompson offered few clues in a memo

of the board, Yang said he was leaving to pursue "other interests outside of Yahoo" and was "enthusiastic" about Thompson as the choice to helm the company.

Yang, 43, is also resigning from the boards of Yahoo Japan and Alibaba Group Holdings.

Respected in the industry as one of the founding figures of the Web, Yang has come under fire over the years from investors and to some extent within the company's internal ranks.

the same as the one that rejected Microsoft's unsolicited takeover bid when Yang was CEO.

"Jerry Yang was certainly an impediment toward anything happening," said Morningstar analyst Rick Summer. "This is a company that's been mired by a bunch of competing interests going in different directions. It was never clear what this board's direction has been."

Microsoft's bid was worth about \$44 billion. Its share price was subsequently pummeled by the global financial crisis and its current market value stands at about \$20 billion.

More recently, Yang and Yahoo chairman Roy Bostock have incurred the wrath of some major Yahoo shareholders for their handling of the "strategic review" the company was pursuing, in which discussions have included the possibility of being sold, taken private or broken up.

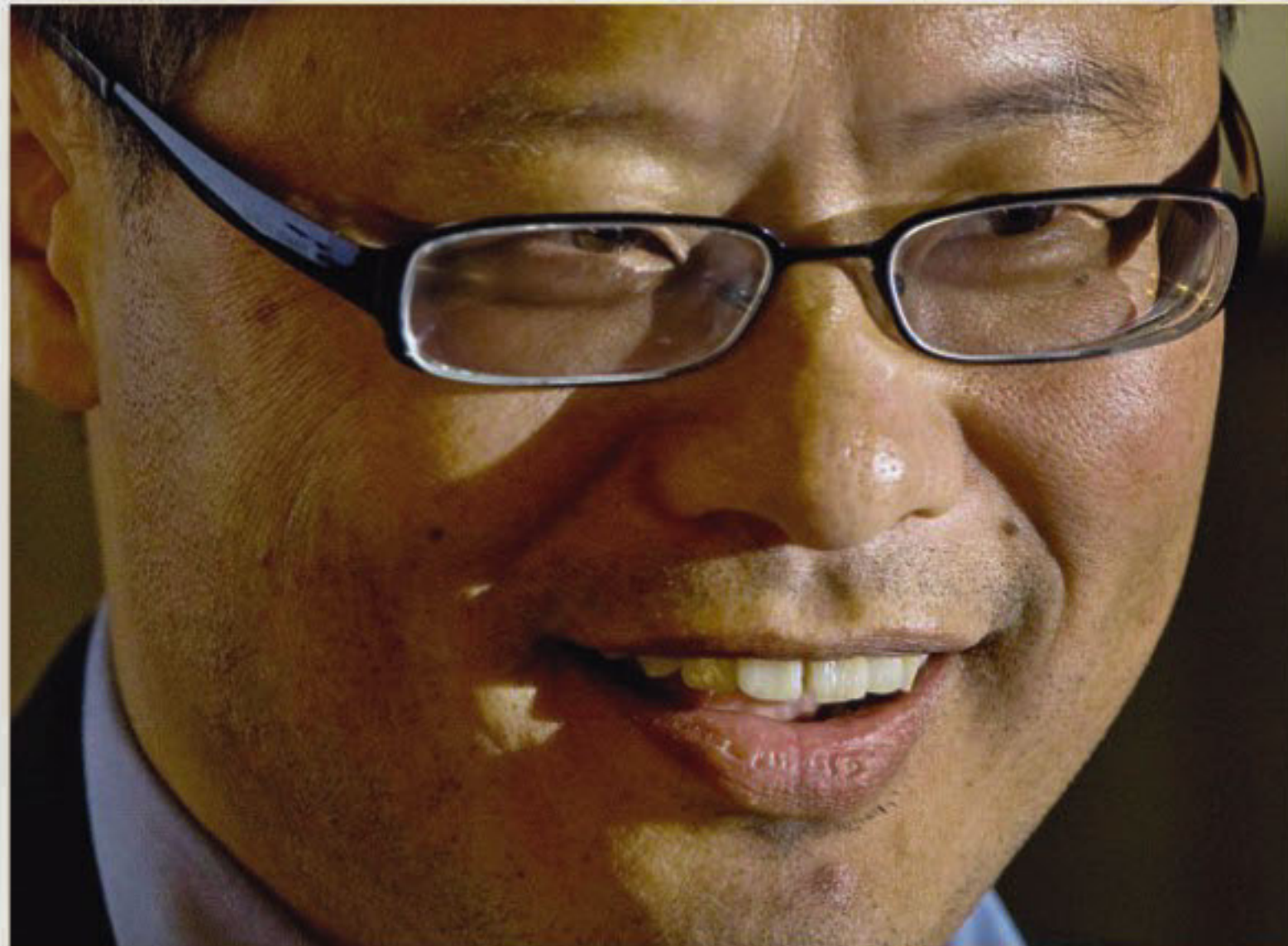
Yang's efforts to seek a minority investment in Yahoo from private equity firms enraged several large shareholders, including hedge fund Third Point, which accused Yang of pursuing a deal that was in "his best personal interests" but not aligned with shareholders' interests.

Yahoo has also been exploring a deal to unload most of its prized Asian assets in a complex deal involving Alibaba, valued at roughly \$17 billion, sources told Reuters last month.

Alibaba Group's founder, Jack Ma, whose personal relationship with Yang led to Yahoo buying a 40 percent stake in Alibaba in 2005, said he looked forward to continuing a "constructive relationship" with Yahoo.

Susquehanna analyst Herman Leung said: "I had thought that Jerry Yang was a lifer at Yahoo."

"Without him on the board, this could smooth a potential transaction. What that transaction is, is any of our guesses right now."



Jerry Yang

to employees obtained by Reuters following the announcement.

"I am grateful for the support and warm welcome Jerry provided me in my early days here. His insights and perspective were invaluable, helping me to dig deeper, more quickly than I could have on my own, into some of the key elements of the company and how it operates."

Yang and co-founder David Filo, both of whom carried the official title "Chief Yahoo," own sizable stakes in the company. Yang owns 3.69 percent of Yahoo's outstanding shares, while Filo owns 6 percent as of April and May 2011.

In a letter to Yahoo's chairman

"Lots of people think he holds up innovation there with old ideas and (is) slow to decide and that he's not an innovator himself for being at such a high level," said one former Yahoo employee.

"People have very high expectations for founders. Everyone wants a Steve Jobs," the employee said, referring to Apple's co-founder who brought the company back from near death and transformed it into the world's most valuable tech company.

Some analysts say the Yahoo board's indecision stems in part from Yang's sway in the company. Disillusioned by the company's flip-flopping, they warn that the rest of the board remained much

# World Marketing Summit to innovate solutions through marketing

PHILIP KOTLER

**E**VERY nation places a high value on education. Education takes place not only in a nation's schools and colleges but also in its conferences where experts meet to share their knowledge and experience with each other and with their audience. One such conference will take place in Dhaka on March 1-3 and its aim is to explore how to "Create a Better World Through Marketing". The conference will be the world's first World Marketing Summit and will bring together over 50 speakers and over 5,000 delegates to discuss how marketing can help improve four major sectors, namely education, health, environment and food.

This conference will be unique in certain ways. First it will bring together marketing experts from a variety of countries in Asia, the Middle East, and the West. All of the speakers have consulted countries or companies or nonprofit organisations on how to improve the lives of people through a better grasp and application of marketing principles and strategies.

Second, the conference is not over when it is over. The meetings at the conference will include the initiation of eight research projects (called incubators) taking place in different parts of the world. For example, the group that is trying to improve food in the world will select some issues, such as "improving the nutritious quality of food" or "educating people to eat better food" and develop a plan of research to achieve new insights and practical steps to improve food for people.

Third, the conference will take place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a country of 170 million people. It will address issues of high relevance to Bangladesh as the country works hard to improve the lives of its people and develop models that can be used by other developing nations. Bangladesh will gain the further benefit of higher visibility in other parts of the world for its sponsoring and supporting this World Marketing Summit.

The writer is the SC Johnson & Son distinguished professor of international marketing, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, IL, USA.



Philip Kotler