

# In Asia's trend-setting cities, iPhone fatigue sets in

REUTERS, Singapore

Apple Inc's iconic iPhone is losing some of its lustre among Asia's well-heeled consumers in Singapore and Hong Kong, a victim of changing mobile habits and its own runaway success.

Driven by a combination of iPhone fatigue, a desire to be different and a plethora of competing devices, users are turning to other brands, notably those from Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, eating into Apple's market share.

In Singapore, Apple's products were so dominant in 2010 that more devices here ran its iOS operating system per capita than anywhere else in the world.

But StatCounter, which measures traffic collected across a network of 3 million websites, calculates that Apple's share of mobile devices in Singapore - iPad and iPhone - declined sharply last year. From a peak of 72 percent in January 2012, its share fell to 50 percent this month, while Android devices now account for 43 percent of the market, up from 20 percent in the same month last year.

In Hong Kong, devices running Apple's

iOS now account for about 30 percent of the total, down from about 45 percent a year ago. Android accounts for nearly two-thirds.

"Apple is still viewed as a prestigious brand, but there are just so many other cool smartphones out there now that the competition is just much stiffer," said Tom Clayton, chief executive of Singapore-based Bubble Motion, which develops a popular regional social media app called Bubbly.

Where Hong Kong and Singapore lead, other key markets across fast-growing Asia usually follow.

"Singapore and Hong Kong tend to be, from an electronics perspective, leading indicators on what is going to be hot in Western Europe and North America, as well as what is going to take off in the region," said Jim Wagstaff, who runs a Singapore-based company called Jam Factory developing mobile apps for enterprises.

Southeast Asia is adopting smartphones fast - consumers spent 78 percent more on smartphones in the 12 months up to September 2012 than they did the year before, according to research company GfK.

# Law on course to protect indigenous products

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The ministry can also open multiple branches of the wing across the country.

The GI is a name or sign used on certain products to certify that they possess certain qualities because they are made according to traditional methods or enjoy a certain reputation due to its geographical origin.

The government has taken the initiative to formulate the GI Act in 2009, with the first draft of the law placed on the industries ministry's website in January last year, a ministry official said.

To register a product, the association or co-operative of the product will have to apply; no one individual can register a product.

Upon receiving the application, the registrar will run a newspaper circular to find out whether any other trade body or association objects to the registration.

If any party wants to oppose the listing, it will have to complain to the GI wing within 60 days from the date of the newspaper circular. The registration of GI goods will be valid for ten years with an option for renewal for another ten years.

If persons or associations are not the real owners of the GI goods and try to get

the certificate, they will be punished with a maximum of three years' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 2 lakh or both.

Mahboob Murshed, a former additional judge and a legal expert, said the GI Act will protect the rights of the real producers of any particular goods in an area.

For example, if the farmers of Dinajpur can register Katari bhog as the rice of Dinajpur under the GI law, none but them can use the Katari bhog name.

If the GI law comes into force, Jamdani can be registered to the country and no foreign country can export any clothing item named Jamdani to Bangladesh, he said.

Murshed also urged the government to be a member of the Lisbon agreement so that Bangladesh can place absolute claims to its products.

"If Bangladesh becomes a party to the Lisbon agreement, Jamdani can be registered as a product of Bangladesh internationally and appellation of origin [special GI] of Jamdani can be assigned in the name of Bangladesh," he said.

Monira Emdad, president of National Crafts Council of Bangladesh, said the law will give an international right to Bangladesh's traditional craft products against piracy.

# New top brass for ceramics makers' body

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shirajul Islam Mollah, managing director of China-Bangla Ceramic Industries, and Rizvi Ul Kabir, chief operating officer of Shinepukur Ceramics, have recently been selected as the president and general secretary of the executive committee of Bangladesh Ceramic Wares Manufacturers' Association.

The post of the committee president had fallen vacant due to the demise of Iftekhar Uddin Farhad in December 2012, the association said in a statement yesterday.

Irfan Uddin, managing director of Farr Ceramics, has been made a member of the committee, according to the statement.



Shirajul Islam Mollah

# Renault-Nissan, Daimler and Ford to develop car fuel-cell

AFP, Paris

The Franco-Japanese automakers Renault-Nissan have signed a deal with Daimler and Ford to develop a fuel cell which would equip electric cars from 2017, a joint statement said on Monday.

The three groups plan to hold equal shares in the project and expect to launch the first large scale production of affordable fuel-cell powered vehicles in 2017, the statement said, without providing financial details of the agreement.

"The collaboration sends a clear signal to suppliers, policymakers and the industry to encourage further development of hydrogen refuelling stations and other infrastructure necessary to allow the vehicles to be mass-marketed," the statement said.

Electric vehicles already represent a major development strategy for Renault-Nissan, and fuel cells, which used a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen to pro-

# DSE launches two indices for better calculation

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Instead of using all the shares outstanding as in full-market capitalisation, which DGEN follows, the free-float method excludes locked-in shares held by promoters and governments.

The need for a new index arose following the listing of Grameenphone on November 16, 2009, when the benchmark index of the DSE shot up more than 764 points.

The abnormal jump, due to the index's faulty computation methodology, created confusion in the market.

The DSE was supposed to introduce the new index by April 2012, but the prime bourse took its time to ensure that the index met international standards.

"Investors' confusion over the old flawed index will be removed as we introduced world-class indices for the market," Rahman said.

Ahmed Rashid, senior vice-president of the DSE, said the launch of new international index will attract foreign investors to Bangladesh.

"The new index will encourage investors to play in the market," Rashid said.

DSEX, the key market tracking index of the DSE, finished its first day at 4,090.47 points, after surging 34.56 points, or 0.85 percent.

DS30 index closed the day at 1,473.01 points, after gaining 12.70 points or 0.87 percent.

"But the DS30 index will be traded in the market when we will introduce derivative market," Rahman said.

"We are working to develop the market for the inter-

# Govt to inspect 500 rogue RMG units

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He urged the minister not to cancel the trade licences of the unlicensed factories, as they are also contributing to exports.

The government should give the factories a deadline to be compliant and strengthen their fire safety measures, Osman said. Meanwhile, a probe committee formed by the government's fire service department sent letters to the owners of Smart Export Garment, asking them to appear before the panel.

As the committee could not find the owners, it left the letter with the caretaker of the factory, said Bharat Chandra Biswas, head of the probe committee and deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

"We have to complete our entire investigation within seven working days," said Biswas, on the second day of the probe. The committee has already visited the site and taken statements from the eyewitnesses, he said.

Chowdhury Manjurul Karim, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Tejgaon zone), said no arrests were made so far, but their efforts were going on.

He said they also formed a two-member committee on Sunday to conduct an investigation into the incident.

Meanwhile, a demonstration by workers and labour leaders took place in front of the factory premises yesterday morning, but it was dispersed by the police within five minutes. The workers later headed towards

# UAE to talk deep-sea port with govt

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During its one-day stay in Dhaka, the delegation will hold talks with the ministers of finance, foreign affairs and shipping. It will also pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The team will also meet with the Board of Investment and discuss the investment climate in Bangladesh.

Asked about the progress in the DP World proposal, a senior official of the foreign ministry said the ministry was yet to hear the proposal at length. China has already shown interest in the project and discussion has already taken place at the highest levels of the two countries, he added.

The foreign ministry will compare the details of the two proposals, prior to further decisions.



PRIME BANK

Ahmed Kamal Khan Chowdhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank, attends a programme where BUR O Bangladesh disbursed agri loans, financed by the bank, through its members at Kotbari in Comilla yesterday. Md Sirajul Islam, director of BUR O Bangladesh, was also present.



BRAC BANK

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of BRAC Bank, and Promoth Manghat, vice president for global operations at UAE Exchange, attend the launch of FLASH remit service at a programme at the head office of the bank in Dhaka recently.

# ADP efforts get speed

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The problems in utilisation of foreign aid are discussed every three months at a meeting of the Local Consultative Group, a platform of the local representatives of development partners.

Among 53 ministries and divisions, 10 ministries and divisions spent 72 percent of the total ADP.

The roads division has become the best performer in the current fiscal year by spending 47 percent of its allocation in the first six months of the year.

Of the other 10 large ministries and divisions, the good performers are: power division that spent 44 percent, primary and mass education ministry 38 percent, education ministry 37 percent and local government division 35 percent.

Of the poor performers, the health and family welfare ministry utilised 20 percent of their allocation, the railway ministry 16 percent, the industries ministry 10 percent, the energy and mineral resources division 28 percent and the water resources ministry 22 percent.

# Use coal resources or face energy dearth soon

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TDS: When are your Bibiyana and Meghnaghat projects coming into generation?

MAK: Meghnaghat is scheduled to begin generation in August 2013 and Bibiyana 2 in May 2014, both as per contractual schedule.

TDS: How are you funding them?

MAK: It is always difficult to fund such large projects, each of about \$300 million in a country with a GDP of about \$110 billion. The savings of the nation is too low to fund large projects. We require our development partners, multilaterals included, to support such much-needed projects. Fortunately, we could get new sources of financing such as German Development Bank, Belgian Development Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and IDCOL to support Meghnaghat 335mw project at a time when conventional supporters like the World Bank Group could not process their Investment Promotion and Facilitation Fund (IPFF) or Partial Risk Guarantee, which were expected.

I believe that as a Bangladeshi company, Summit did an incredible job by financing Meghnaghat at a time when the local money market tightened and the stockmarket collapsed. Yet we persevered to get the largest ever financing from our local banks -- Trust Bank, BRAC Bank, City Bank, Islami Bank Bangladesh and Shahjalal Islami Bank. We are very grateful and proud of our local and international financiers. And the project is on schedule.

TDS: What is about Bibiyana?

MAK: We are already implementing Bibiyana 2. We started as soon as the Bangladesh Power Development Board registered the land to us. Financiers like the IFC and ADB are very likely to support this project. Local banks such as Prime Bank, Dhaka Bank and Janata Bank are also financing this project. For

a local company like Summit, it is an unprecedented way to move forward with the support of the local banks to implement projects of Tk 5,000 crore.

TDS: However, you have not been able to implement Bibiyana 1 and it is alleged that you have taken more than you can digest.

MAK: Well, we are still working on it. It is a rare opportunity for a person or a company to do so much for their country, as Summit and I received by way of requiring to implement the country's largest and the lowest-cost electricity projects. We have the confidence to take up the challenge and we are implementing the projects.

Bibiyana 1 was to be financed by \$115 million of the IPFF loan at 3 percent interest with an 18-year tenure and partial risk guarantee of the World Bank Group. None of these came about, not because of Summit's failure but for reasons beyond our control. Yet we are desirous to implement the project but need to restructure the finance. The BPDB also failed to get the land registered. However, as a well wisher of the country, we have informed the government that we are willing to let the project go.

Meanwhile, the government has signed to implement Bibiyana 3 as a government project and allowed a Saudi company to develop yet another project in Bibiyana. So the necessity of Bibiyana 1 may have diminished. However Rural Power Co Ltd of Rural Electrification Board and many other companies are desirous of taking over Bibiyana 1. We are still interested. This is in an ongoing discussion. I am not trying to make excuses but merely saying that such large projects are connected to the country's overall situation.

TDS: How do you evaluate the government's planning and performance in the power sector?



IBBL

Mahabubur Rahman, mayor of Bogra municipality, opens an ATM booth of Islami Bank Bangladesh at Mohasthanagarh in Bogra on Sunday. Anisur Rahman, manager of Borogola branch of the bank, was also present.

# Ultimatum to arrest owners of Tazreen, Smart

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The programme, by the BGMEA Bhaban, was organised by several leftist parties and three garment workers' organisations -- Garment Sramik Oikko Forum, Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, and Bangladesh Textile Garment Workers Federation.

"Tougher agitation programmes will be announced if the arrest of the owners of Tazreen Fashions and Smart Export Garment does not happen," said Communist Party of Bangladesh President Mujahidul Islam Selim.

He alleged that the government is denying the victims' families by not conducting a neutral and fair investigation into the fire incidents at the two factories.

"The government and the BGMEA [Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers

and Exporters Association] are actually saving the owners," he added.

Meanwhile, Prof Anu Mohammad of Jahangirnagar University criticised the home minister's unwillingness to arrest the garment factory owners.

He said both the government and the garment factory owners are responsible for the tragedies at the garment factories.

The garment industry will eventually collapse if such practice continues, he added. "The government has taken no initiative to conduct regular inspections at garment factories."

Advocate Montu Ghosh, president of Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, Moshrefa Mishu of Garment Sramik Oikko Forum and several garment workers injured by the fires, also spoke at the programme.