

# Hitachi brings tech to cut data storage costs

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**H**ITACHI, a Japanese conglomerate, has developed a technology to cut data storage costs by up to 65 percent, which the company said will help end-users save on such expenses by a wide margin.

Vivekanand Venugopal, managing director of Hitachi Data Systems India Pvt Ltd, said the company can now reduce 34 types of direct costs associated with data storage processes.

To do more with less money is an important issue for companies now, and currently their data storage costs are flat, he said during an interview with The Daily Star in Dhaka recently.

Of the total data generated by companies, usually just 10 percent is structured, like that produced by banking channels and other corporate and government processes, Venugopal said.

"People also want to store e-mails and pictures, which increase every day."

Machines also generate a huge amount of data like office entrance and exit as well as leave related records, and a lot of that needs to be stored for a long time, sometimes even forever, for analysis and other purposes, he said.

Through Hitachi's new convergence system they can store more and more data at lower costs without compromising security, Venugopal said.

Hitachi is a highly diversified company that operates in eleven business segments of which the electronic systems and equipment segment and information and telecommunication systems segment prominent.

Even though Hitachi did not do an official study on Bangladesh, the company thinks the data market is set to grow fast as the government is actively pursuing full digitisation, which will increase the need for better and securer data storage and analysis services, he said.

As the number of digitised services increases, it will require more data analysis



Vivekanand Venugopal, managing director of Hitachi Data Systems India, speaks at a programme in Dhaka recently.

processes as well.

"Through the data analysis processes, the government can even ensure better security, as it will help the authorities to find the best suitable positions for setting up security cameras and analyse the data received."

If police officials have real data and they analyse the data with a proper system they can act more effectively, the Hitachi official said. Some Indian institutes have used the system for their benefit, he added.

Proper data analysis can also help telecommunication companies offer better services, as well as help the government take better decisions in the healthcare sector, he said, adding that the solution is evolving all over the world.

Hitachi, in operations for 105 years, is mainly focusing on the government sector, banking, telecommunication, manufacturing, and medical and healthcare systems with its new technology.

At present ten leading global banks are using Hitachi solutions to secure their customers' data and offer innovative services and applications, he said.

In Bangladesh, Hitachi plans to offer storage, content, analytics and social innovation solutions platforms, for all of which security is the first priority, Venugopal said.

"The judiciary in New Delhi is currently using Hitachi's technology to operate a system providing case details online."

Registered lawyers can access the system and get a copy of the court order without any

charge or hassle of physically going to court.

Also, Hitachi's hospital management solutions are being used for preserving MRI and X-ray data in some prominent public hospitals in India.

Today the governments expend much on the healthcare system but many times the system fails due to a lack of proper data management, which can be avoided with Hitachi's solutions, Venugopal said.

Hitachi also focuses on not harming nature with their technology, he added.

Technology changes so frequently that every three to five years users adopt new technologies discarding the old ones, Venugopal said. Every year, the price of data storage or any tech related products falls by 30 percent to 40 percent.

## Microsoft launches much-awaited Windows 10

REUTERS

Microsoft Corp launched its much-awaited Windows 10 operating system at midnight on Wednesday.

Windows 10, which comes almost three years after the launch of the company's last operating system, will be available as a free upgrade in 190 countries for users of Windows 7, Windows 8.1 and Windows Phone 8.1 operating systems, the company said.

The new operating system is designed to work across laptops, desktop and smartphones and is part of Chief Executive Satya Nadella's push towards winning back lost ground in the tablets and mobile arena.

Last week, Chief Financial Officer Amy Hood said the company was looking to generate revenue by building search and gaming capabilities into the Windows 10 interface.

## Panasonic three-month net profit soars more than 50pc

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese electronics giant Panasonic said Wednesday that its net profit soared 57 percent from a year ago, mainly thanks to a tax accounting change as the electronics giant continues to reshape its business.

The Osaka-based firm's earnings for the three months to June surged to 59.52 billion yen (\$482 million), while operating profit edged down seven percent to 76.56 billion yen.

Sales were almost flat at 1.86 trillion yen from a year ago.

The upbeat net profit was also supported by Panasonic's lesser-known auto parts unit.

The division's bottom line grew 35 percent from the same period last year "due mainly to rationalisation in materials, fixed-cost reductions and the positive impact of exchange rate fluctuation", the company said in a statement.

Panasonic's auto division makes various products found in vehicles, including electrical components and car navigation systems.

It has also agreed on a capital and business alliance with Spain's Ficoso International to jointly produce electronic mirror systems, taking a 49 percent stake in the firm last month.

# Little by little, Germans look beyond cash to shop

AFP, Berlin

**T**OURISTS and business travellers visiting Germany are often surprised when they reach to pay for their beer, metro tickets or even a large restaurant bill that their credit cards are not welcome.

Habits, however, are slowly changing in Europe's top economy, as younger consumers leapfrog from cash to convenient electronic forms of payment.

A deeply ingrained mistrust of credit has long kept cash king in Germany, where the average citizen carries 103 euros (\$113) in their pocket.

"Cards have long been the most costly means of payment for merchants while cash transactions cost them almost nothing," Ulrich Binneboessel of the HDE retail sector federation told AFP, explaining the reluctance to accept credit cards.

More than half of the amount spent in Germany on private purchases, 53 percent, is paid in cash, according to a study by the Bundesbank central bank -- one of the highest rates for an advanced economy.

In terms of the number of transactions, the figure hovers at 79 percent despite the fact that nearly all Germans have debit cards, which are much more widely accepted by vendors.

A third of those polled said they only paid in cash, far more than in other Western countries, with the rate particularly high among pensioners.

One among them, who asked to be identified only as Reinhard, always carries money and knows exactly how much he has on him at any point in time.

"In a shop, I think it's a waste of time to pay any other way but with cash," he said.

Reinhard, who lives in the western state of Hesse, said he is afraid



he will be charged too much and discover it only when he receives the bill in the mail, and is wary of hackers and identity thieves who prey on cardholders.

Security and privacy are high priorities among Germans, who tend to be more conservative consumers with a strong aversion to debt. The vestigial trauma from 1920s-era hyperinflation which helped usher in the Nazi era still colours the national thinking.

"Consumers in Germany have little desire to experiment," said Carl-Ludwig Thiele, a Bundesbank board member.

But "changes in how people pay are coming, step-by-step".

In a revolutionary move by German standards, discount retailers Lidl and Aldi started accepting Visa and MasterCard this month, after electronics chains Media Markt and Saturn took the same decision in late May.

And from the autumn, Media

Markt and Saturn customers will be able to check themselves out at the till by scanning their cards or mobile phones.

"It is no longer relevant to talk today of Germany as a country of cash payers. Perhaps the Germans just need a little longer than others to be convinced of the benefits of the new payment systems," said Horst Rueter of research institute EHI in the western city of Cologne.

Buyers who came of age in the Internet era are rapidly embracing a world without cash, with 20 percent of German 14 to 29 year

olds already paying using their smartphones, according to a survey by the high-tech industry federation Bitkom.

"With the technical possibilities now available, coins and notes are an anachronism," Peter Bofinger, one of five Wise Men experts advising the German government on economic policy, told Der Spiegel news magazine.

Beyond the benefits to consumers, he said, less cash would improve efficiency and make it easier to combat money laundering and other financial crimes.

However, reassurance about the safety of payment methods and a ceiling on costs are crucial because "the willingness of consumers to pay for payment services is extremely low," said Thiele.

The European Union this month passed a regulation capping fees on payments made with debit and credit cards, which should also spur their use.

"The trend towards less cash will continue, although this will be a continuous and slow process," Rueter said.

Cash will only cover less than half the payments in the "medium term", the Bundesbank said.

For its defenders, cash offers a kind of freedom. Three in four Germans said they would object to merchants refusing cash in the future, according to a survey by polling group YouGov.

"Each country has its own way of paying," Rueter said, based on "a mixture of cultural specificity, specific needs and common sense" which can evolve with time.



A worker of Japan's Takahide Dairy Farm feeds cows at its farm.

## Japanese butter on the table in Pacific trade talks

AFP, Tokyo

Japan has been grappling with a severe butter shortage that critics say highlights a bigger problem with the country's protected agricultural sector, a key sticking point in high-profile trade talks this week in Hawaii.

The United States, Japan, and 10 other Pacific Rim countries are looking to finalise the most ambitious trade deal in decades, a vast free-trade bloc encompassing 40 percent of the world's economy.

But the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has drawn the ire of Japan's politically powerful agriculture lobby and sparked public protests by farmers over fears it will mean an onslaught of cheaper foreign imports.

Free-trade backers counter that Japan's food growers have been living behind sky-high tariffs and other protectionist barriers for too long, creating an inefficient system that puts overpriced food on supermarket shelves.

The butter market, where domestic production has not been keeping up with demand and imports are tightly restricted, highlights a wider problem, they say.

The Japan Dairy Association has warned that butter demand will outstrip supply by more than 7,000 tonnes this year, prompting the government to resort to emergency imports to fill the gap.

Butter shortages last year provoked anguish for shoppers, especially in the run-up to the Christmas cake-baking season, with grocery stores nationwide forced to resort to rationing.

"It is tempting to dismiss this (latest)

episode as an amusing footnote, but it highlights the broader failure of Japan's agricultural policy," says Marcel Thieliant from research firm Capital Economics.

"The command economy approach... prevents farmers from responding flexibly to swings in demand."

Japan has myriad regulations and high tariffs on farm products -- the levy on imported rice can reach an eye-watering 800 percent -- that have been a key sticking point in Tokyo's talks with Washington over the TPP.

The government is now considering cutting levies as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe looks to overhaul Japan's agricultural sector -- part of his wider plan to jumpstart the world's number three economy.

The move to open up the market for key products including beef and rice to foreign competition has already put him on a collision course with the country's powerful farm lobby.

"Trying to protect the Japanese farming sector with tariffs has not created a lucrative industry," says Toshihiro Nagahama, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"Maintaining the status quo would only mean the eventual demise of the sector."

The push for liberalisation comes as Japan's agricultural sector is fighting a losing battle with demographics as more and more farmers retire -- the average age is 67 -- without any young people to replace them.

This is exacerbated by the fact that agricultural production is dominated by small-scale producers who rely on subsidies, while government regulations effec

## Russia halts foreign currency purchases after ruble slides

AFP, Moscow

Russia's central bank announced Wednesday it had halted its purchases of foreign currency on the back of a recent slump by the ruble.

Over the past few months as the ruble stabilised, the bank has been buying up foreign currency to replenish reserves it spent trying to prop up the plunging cur-

rency last year.

But officials said they have now halted the purchases due to a "growth of volatility on the domestic currency market" after the ruble plummeted this week to its lowest point since March as global oil prices dropped.

Oleg Kouzmin, an economist at Renaissance Capital, welcomed the central bank's move as "a very rational and timely decision."

The ruble picked up slightly following Wednesday's decision, reaching 59.84 to the dollar.

Economists had warned that the latest slide could see inflation, which cooled slightly to a still-high 15.3 percent last month, creep up again and throw further interest rate cuts into doubt.

The central bank will decide Friday whether to cut its interest

rates for the fifth time this year in a bid to breathe life into Russia's battered economy.

Russia's economy has slumped into recession on the back of lower oil prices and Western sanctions over Ukraine.

Authorities have claimed that the worst of the crisis has already been reached but the new drop in the ruble has highlighted how volatile the situation remains.