

Japan exports to China slump in challenge for Tokyo's growth bid



Containers are loaded onto a freighter at a pier of Tokyo port yesterday.

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese exports to China fell again last month as a slowdown in the world's number two economy weighs on the countries' huge trading links, official data showed Wednesday, while shipments to the key US market also stumbled.

The disappointing figures, following a decline a month earlier, highlight the challenges facing Tokyo's bid to kick-start the economy in the face of slowing global growth.

And they will heap pressure on the Bank of Japan ahead of a meeting next week, with speculation building that policymakers are set to announce more stimulus as Japan teeters on the brink of recession.

The value of exports by Japanese firms to China sank 3.5 percent in September, the finance ministry said, while they were also down to other Asian countries.

While export values were up in the key US market and European Union, the volume of US-bound goods weakened.

Japan's exports grew by just 0.6 percent last month, their slowest pace in over year, underscoring global weakness, despite the benefits of a weak yen, which makes the country's exporters more competitive overseas.

On Monday, fresh third-quarter data showed China's

economy grew at its slowest rate in six years.

Worries about China have rippled across global equity markets and sown fear about the wider impact on global growth.

"(Japanese) exports are weak across the board and that trend is expected to continue for the time being," said Taro Saito, a senior researcher at NLI Research Institute.

"While exports to Asia and China are weak, more importantly, volumes to the US are slowing."

The latest figures are a red flag ahead of next month's release of third-quarter GDP figures, which follow a contraction in the April-June period.

The International Monetary Fund has cut its growth forecast for Japan

while Standard & Poor's recently lowered its credit rating on the country, expressing doubt that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's plan to fix the economy would work.

Abe has for more than two years pushed a huge spending blitz and monetary easing drive -- called "Abenomics" -- to inject life into the world's number three economy and reverse almost two decades of deflation.

While the scheme showed early promise, with stocks surging and growth advancing, recent weak numbers have raised questions about its effectiveness as consumer prices stagnate and economic growth stalls.

Wednesday's lacklustre trade data may boost speculation that Japan's central bank will expand its record 80 trillion yen (\$665 billion) annual asset-buying scheme to counter the downturn.

However, in one bright spot, Japan's overall trade balance was down close to 90 percent from a year earlier as weak energy prices took pressure off the country's import bill.

The trade deficit fell to 114.5 billion yen (\$955.6 million) in September, compared with 962 billion yen in the same month of last year.

Energy imports went through the roof after Japan was forced to turn to expensive fossil fuel alternatives when its nuclear plants were shuttered in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis.



Akku Chowdhury, managing director of Transcom Foods, poses at the launch of flatbread hand-stretched pizza by Pizza Hut at its RM Centre outlet on Gulshan Avenue in Dhaka on Tuesday. The pizzas available in four different flavours--simple vegetable, beef BBQ, chicken sausage and spicy chicken--will be sold at Tk 250 each. Celebrities Sharmin Lucky, Topu, Bonny Mirza and Munmun were also present.

PIZZA HUT

Uber invests big in China in face of fierce rival

AFP, San Francisco

The head of Uber on Tuesday said the ride-sharing firm has spent a billion dollars to gain traction in China, where the local champ may not be playing fair.

Uber's share of the Chinese market has climbed from one percent at the start of the year to about 30 percent. But the company remains a distant second to Didi Kuaidi, Uber co-founder and chief executive Travis Kalanick said during an on-stage chat at a WSJLive technology conference on the Southern California coast.

The controversial, mobile Internet based ride sharing service was hitting points of profitability in some cities in North America and Europe, but remains a money-losing "underdog" in China, according to Kalanick.

While stopping short of saying that

dirty tricks were coming into play in the battle for the China ride-sharing market, he knows of some data that might back his case.

Didi backer TenCent owns messaging service WeChat, which has shut down Uber accounts, suppressed positive stories about Uber and promoted negative news, Kalanick said.

He contended that there was even a time when WeChat messages containing the word "Uber" would vanish into the ether, appearing to senders as though they had been delivered.

California-based Uber remains devoted to what Kalanick described as an exciting and fast-growing China market for ride-sharing service in the mobile Internet age.

"We are investing a fair amount of money there," Kalanick said.

"We are definitely spending a billion dollars a year on that effort but

we feel great about it. For an entrepreneur, this is where the action is."

Uber last month confirmed that it had raised an additional \$1.2 billion in a funding round led by Chinese online search colossus Baidu.

The news came about the same time as word of arch-rival Didi adding \$3 billion to its wallet in a funding round of its own.

Uber now claims to do nearly as many rides in China as it does in the United States, and use in cities there is reported to be soaring.

"Apple is seeing explosive growth in China, and we are seeing that as well," Kalanick said. "Huge cities that really need transportation alternatives; it is a real sweet spot for us."

Kalanick downplayed opposition Uber has faced from the taxi industry and government regulators in various parts of the world.



Khondker Fazole Rashid, managing director of Premier Bank, and Shaikh Abdul Aziz, managing director of LEADS Corporation, exchange documents of an agreement to introduce chip cards of Europay, MasterCard and Visa for the bank's customers. The cardholders of the bank will be able to use the chip cards for transactions instead of present magnetic stripe cards.

LEADS CORPORATION

Surprise departure of Syngenta chief after firm dodged Monsanto takeover

AFP, Geneva

In a surprise announcement, Swiss agrochemicals giant Syngenta said Wednesday its chief executive Mike Mack was stepping down, just two months after the company rejected a massive takeover bid by Monsanto.

"Mike Mack has informed the board of his intention to step down as chief executive officer and executive director of the company," Syngenta said in a statement, adding that Mack would leave by the end of next week.

He will be replaced temporarily at the helm by the company's finance chief John Ramsay, it said.

"I believe that this is an appropriate

time for the company to benefit from the perspectives of a new leader," said Mack, an American citizen who has worked for Syngenta for the past 14 years -- eight of them as company chief.

His departure comes after US seed giant Monsanto in late August finally dropped its campaign to buy Syngenta for some \$46 billion.

That sent the Swiss company's share price into a tailspin, and it has lost more than 20 percent of its value over the past two months.

In a move to placate shareholders, the company last month announced it would sell its vegetable seed business and buy back \$2.0 billion worth in shares in a bid to "accelerate shareholder value creation".

EU orders Starbucks, Fiat to pay 20-30m euros in back taxes

AFP, Brussels

The European Union ordered Starbucks and Fiat on Wednesday to each repay up to 30 million euros in back taxes in a landmark tax avoidance case pursued in the wake of the LuxLeaks scandal.

"Luxembourg is to recover 20-30 million euros (\$23-34 million) from Fiat and The Netherlands to recover 20-30 million from Starbucks Manufacturing -- unpaid taxes due to illegal state aid," EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a tweet announcing the decision.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, has launched a series of tax probes against top companies, including US technology giants Apple and Amazon, and Wednesday's decision is a sign that European regulators are willing to take on the tax affairs of the world's most influential companies.

"Tax rulings that artificially reduce a company's tax burden are not in line with EU state aid rules. They are illegal," Vestager said in a briefing to journalists in Brussels.

"All companies, big or small, multinational or not, should pay their fair share of tax," the former Danish economy minister said.

The EU's four tax probes were

announced last year in the wake of the LuxLeaks affair, which revealed that some of the world's biggest companies had negotiated lower rates, in some cases just one percent, in secret pacts with Luxembourg.

Luxembourg says the tax rulings, as they are known, were not illegal and the companies involved insist they fully comply with the tax laws where they operate.

"Luxembourg disagrees with the conclusions reached by the European Commission in the Fiat Finance and Trade case and reserves all its rights," Luxembourg's finance minister Pierre Gramegna said on his Twitter account.

Last year's revelations were a huge embarrassment to Jean-Claude Juncker, then newly installed as Commission head after serving nearly 19 years as Luxembourg prime minister.

The Commission bases its case however on EU competition law, arguing that such sweetheart tax deals give the companies involved an unfair advantage over their often smaller rivals.

Taking on Apple and Amazon would come at a delicate time for EU-US business ties and as Brussels and Washington negotiate a huge free trade pact amid deep suspicions in Europe that Brussels may give too much away to get an agreement.

Toyota recalls 6.5m cars over window defect

BBC NEWS

Japanese carmaker Toyota has said it will recall 6.5 million vehicles globally over a faulty window switch.

The power switch could short-circuit, causing parts to overheat and potentially leading to a fire, the company said.

It is the latest in a string of recalls by the carmaker.

Toyota has already recalled some 10 million cars globally that were fitted with faulty air bags linked to a number of deaths.

The defective window switch affects models including the Yaris model as well as the Corolla, Camry, RAV4, Highlander and others. The recall only affects cars produced between 2005 and 2010.

Of the total, about 2.7 million cars were sold in North America, 1.2 million in Europe, and 600,000 in Japan, the company said.

The firm explained that modules in a switch related to the electric window might have been lubricated inconsistently during manufacturing.

Apple tells US judge 'impossible' to unlock new iPhones

REUTERS, New York

Apple Inc told a US judge that accessing data stored on a locked iPhone would be "impossible" with devices using its latest operating system, but the company has the "technical ability" to help law enforcement unlock older phones.

Apple's position was laid out in a brief filed late Monday, after a federal magistrate judge in Brooklyn, New York, sought its input as he weighed a US Justice Department request to force the company to help authorities access a seized iPhone during an investigation.

In court papers, Apple said that for the 90 percent of its devices running iOS 8 or higher, granting the Justice Department's request "would be impossible to perform" after it strengthened encryption methods.

Those devices include a feature that prevents anyone without the device's passcode from accessing its data, including Apple itself.

The feature was adopted in 2014 amid heightened privacy concerns following leaks by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden about NSA surveillance programs.

Apple told US Magistrate Judge James Orenstein it could access the 10 percent of its devices that continue to use older systems, including the one at issue in the case. But it urged the judge to not require it to comply with the Justice Department's request.

"Forcing Apple to extract data in this case, absent clear legal authority to do so, could threaten the trust between Apple and its customers and substantially tarnish the Apple brand," Apple's lawyers wrote.

A spokeswoman for Brooklyn US Attorney Robert Capers, whose office is handling the case, declined comment.

WANTED

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the Office of the Registrar, are invited from the Bangladeshi nationals for filling up 1 (one) permanent post of Assistant Professor and 1 (one) permanent post of Lecturer in the Department of Geography & Environment.

Pay scale of Assistant Professor: Tk 18500-800x14-29,700/-

Pay scale of Lecturer: 11000x490x7-14430 EB: 540x11-20370.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ASSISTANT PROFESSOR: Candidates must have minimum First Class/CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Honours & Master's degree examination in Geography & Environment or an equivalent degree from a foreign university with minimum First Divisions/GPA 4.25 out of 5.00 in SSC & HSC Examinations. They should have at least 3 (three) years' teaching experience in a university and research publication in standard journals. The above requirements may be relaxed in the case of those who have PhD degree. Experience and performance as a teacher as well as significant contribution to different areas of university activities especially in guiding the overall educational and co-curricular activities of the students will also be treated as qualification.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LECTURER:

- Candidates must have minimum GPA 4.25 out of 5.00 in SSC and HSC Examinations.
- Candidates must have first class or minimum CGPA 3.5 out of 4.00 in Honours and Master's in Geography and Environment.
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Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials, mark-sheets and proof of experience along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk 750/- (seven hundred fifty) only, payable to the Registrar, should reach him on or before 08-11-2015. Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel.

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