

Canon sees sales growth in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bangladesh, which is a part of the South and Southeast Asian market, is important to Canon because of the country's growth potential, a senior executive of Canon said.

Canon is a Japanese multinational company that manufactures imaging and optical products.

The market share of the company stands at 41 percent in the region whereas it is around 38 percent if the global market is considered, said Naohiko Hayashi, senior director and general manager for consumer imaging and information products group at Canon Singapore.

"So we are actually performing better in our region." Canon will expand its presence in the region, especially in Bangladesh, which is an important market with a population of 160 million, he said.

Hayashi currently oversees the division's sales and marketing operations across 14 countries in South and Southeast Asia region, including Bangladesh.

"We continue to see great opportunities in the region in the long-term because Asia's middle class is rising. That is why

we will continue to invest for the future," he said.

For example, to meet the needs of Canon's future customers here, the company will introduce the Image Square, a retail concept aided by knowledgeable staff, the company quoted Hayashi as saying in a statement.

"Customers can directly touch and try our products."

Canon is one of the most reputed brands around the world, not only because of the features that are available due to its intensive R&D towards innovation, also because of its build quality.

In Bangladesh, it seems almost all brands and products originating or made in Japan are held in high esteem, Hayashi said.

"Whenever we visit the Bangladesh market, we can feel a lot of energy, and it always seems very dynamic, buzzing dynamic."

The import duties are very high here, at 36 percent, for which most goods enter the market unofficially, he said.

"We hope the authorities will aim to bring down the duties so consumers can enjoy lower prices and spur demand further, and more people can enjoy the beautiful art of photography, or even



Naohiko Hayashi

make a living out of using our equipment."

Canon is also exploring growth sectors to complement its technological strengths, to continue growth as a leader in imaging technology, the company said.

"For example, it has embraced the challenge of new growth by cultivating its healthcare and security camera business."

However, the company is not overly concerned by the proliferation of good

quality cameras in smartphones, as they will help grow and deepen the interest in photography for amateurs, Hayashi said.

"The positive impact of the accessibility to smart phone cameras is that more people are developing an interest in photography, and the demand for high-end compact digital cameras and DSLRs are expected to pick up in tandem with growth in countries such as Bangladesh."

"JAN Associates is our trusted partner in the sales and marketing of Canon products for the past 21 years. We have been happy with their performance as our official distributor here in Bangladesh."

"They are a professionally organised company, with a strong network of dealers, which allows quick market penetration for our products," Hayashi said of Canon's local partner.

"They also have very strong corporate relationships, which provide us with good consistent business, which we appreciate," he said.

The company is working with its partner to develop initiatives to create a more personal relationship with customers via photo contests, promotions and roadshows, he said.

"This will help further strengthen our presence and position in the market."

Labour dispute hits bomb-struck Brussels airport

AFP, Brussels

A labour dispute caused the cancellation of flights to and from Brussels international airport for a second day on Wednesday just after it reopened in the wake of deadly jihadist bombings.

Over one hundred flights were cancelled in or out of the Belgian and EU capital, about a quarter of the total scheduled for the day. About a hundred flights were also cancelled Tuesday.

Staff from Belgium's air traffic control organisation Belgacontrol were protesting the terms of a labour contract, including the decision to delay the effective retirement age to 58 instead of the existing 55.

Controllers "said they were sick" and were not able to work, according to a statement from Belgacontrol, which said it "was looking for operational solutions."

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel told Belga news agency "a handful" of workers were "taking the country hostage" just when "the image and economy of the country is under threat" after the attacks.

Belgian authorities have been the subject of international derision for their failure to prevent the March 22 attacks that killed 32 people.

Brussels airport reopened Sunday for the first time since two Islamic State commandos blew themselves up in the departure hall in coordinated blasts that also struck the Maalbeek metro station near EU headquarters.

It will take months to repair the departure hall and full operations are not expected to resume for weeks.



Muhammad Ali, managing director of United Commercial Bank, attends the business review meeting of the bank's operations in Dhaka zone, at the auditorium of the bank's Learning and Development Centre yesterday.

Abdallah Massad, chairman of RAK Ceramics, attends the company's 17th annual general meeting at International Convention City in Bashundhara, Dhaka on Wednesday. RAK declared 25 percent cash dividends for 2015. SAK Ekramuzzaman, managing director, was also present.



Turkish central banker is social scientist with roots in Islamic finance

REUTERS, Istanbul

After winning the backing of President Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's new central bank governor must now convince investors that an Islamic banker without formal training in economics can tame inflation while resisting political pressure to cut rates.

Turkey's cabinet on Monday approved Murat Cetinkaya as the next central bank head, giving some initial relief to investors who had feared a battle between Erdogan, who equates high interest rates with treason, and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's more orthodox economic team.

Despite the initial relief in markets, the 40-year-old Cetinkaya remains something of an unknown quantity, lacking the experience of his predecessor, Erdem Basci, an engineer turned economist Ph.D. whose term as governor expires next week.

Described as "low-key" and "determined" by those who know him, Cetinkaya studied international relations and sociology at Istanbul's prestigious Bosphorus University. He holds a masters degree in social sciences from the same school, where he is several years into a doctorate in politics.

As a banker, his career has been spent in Islamic finance, which prohibits the charging of interest. Erdogan, a pious Muslim, has worked to develop Islamic banking in Turkey.

Since June 2012, Cetinkaya has been a deputy governor at the central bank. Analysts said his background made him a likely pick for Erdogan, given the president's scepticism of the West and its education and value systems.

"Let's be realistic. We will never have a governor who has been educated at an Ivy League university in the U.S. or has worked as manager at a big non-state bank," said Atila Yesilada, an analyst at Global Source Partners, a consultancy.

"Given these restrictions, it is a comfort that he knows the monetary policy board. And he will likely to go down the same route. It has yet to be seen how Cetinkaya will handle political pressure, which his predecessor had to manage frequently."

Erdogan, who favours consumption growth, has repeatedly railed against high interest rates, saying that they cause higher inflation, a stance at odds with orthodox economics.

Basci's reluctance to cut rates had drawn repeated criticism from Erdogan. Last month the central bank kept its main interest rate on hold for the 13th consecutive month, but cut its overnight lending rate, the upper band of its "rate corridor", a move some economists saw as a sop to political pressure.

With inflation running around 7.5 percent according to the latest data, the central bank has consistently missed its inflation target of 5 percent over the last five years.

Basci, a respected academic who has published papers in international journals, was the architect of Turkey's complex interest rate corridor, which uses a system of multiple rates and is aimed at achieving price stability and financial stability simultaneously.

Yet even Basci was seen an unable to completely resist government pressure.

"While it would be unfair and premature at this stage to treat Cetinkaya as Erdogan's lackey, there are plenty of reasons to doubt whether he will be able to face down the government" said Nicholas Spiro, a partner at London-based Laureasia Advisory.

Despite his career, Cetinkaya has soldiered on with his academic work, said his dissertation adviser, Gul Sosay, an assistant professor of political science at Bosphorus University.

She described him as "quiet and determined", adding that his dissertation topic of

financial regulation was something of a departure from standard politics research.

"He is very kind, a quiet and determined person. He has not quit the programme despite his very busy work schedule," Sosay told Reuters. "Even though we wanted to pull him more down to the realm of politics he insisted to have an economic aspect in his research."

Since joining the central bank he has kept a relatively low profile.

"He seems to have been avoiding public appearances therefore we have not seen him in many events contrary to other members of the monetary policy committee," said one of his central bank colleagues, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

In one his rare public speeches, Cetinkaya gave a keynote address at an Islamic Finance conference in November 2015. In fluent English, he emphasised the importance of fiscal discipline and reforms to reach low interest rates.

Cetinkaya will take over his new post from Basci on April 19. He will chair the first interest rate meeting on April 20 and will probably make his first public appearance as the governor on April 26 to announce quarterly inflation report.

Already, the government's spokesman has hinted that Cetinkaya's remit is to support growth.

"Cetinkaya will pursue his responsibilities in line with Turkey's 2023 targets," Numan Kurtulmus said on Monday, referring to Erdogan's targets to make Turkey among the world's top ten economies by the centennial of the Turkish republic's founding.

The low-key Cetinkaya looks unlikely to draw attention to himself, said his colleague at the central bank.

"In his new capacity, he will likely to listen to his colleagues more and is unlikely to have a sharp tongue."

IMF says debt levels highest since World War II

AFP, Washington

Public debt has soared in advanced economies to the highest levels since World War II as governments struggle against slow growth and deflation, the International Monetary Fund warned Wednesday.

Levels of government borrowing have picked up since the financial crisis and continue to rise as economic powers like Japan and Europe remain mired in very slow growth and many emerging and poorer economies struggle with the plunge in income from commodities like oil and metals.

The higher borrowing makes it harder for governments to spend any more to support growth, as the Fund has urged.

On average for advanced economies, the IMF said in its new Fiscal Monitor report, "public debt now exceeds the level observed during the Great Depression and is approaching the level immediately after World War II."

Stocks end flat

FROM PAGE B1

Of traded issues, 120 advanced and 141 declined with 55 securities closing unchanged on the premier bourse.

Jamuna Oil dominated the turnover chart with 12.02 lakh shares worth Tk 22.61 crore changing hands, followed by Aman Feed, MJL Bangladesh, Doreen Power Generations and Systems and LankaBangla Finance.

Among the major sectors, engineering declined 0.87 percent in market capitalisation, followed by life insurance that lost 0.72 percent, textile 0.39 percent, cement 0.27 percent and tannery 0.24 percent.

Conversely, non-bank financial institutions increased 1.98 percent in market capitalisation, followed by fuel and food and allied sectors that rose 1 percent and 0.66 percent. Eastern Cables was the day's best performer with 9.99 percent in gains, while Doreen Power Generations and Systems was the worst loser, shedding 7.32 percent.

Chittagong stocks however closed high with the bourse's benchmark index, CSCX, increasing 13.64 points or 0.16 percent, to finish the day at 8,246.6 points.

Losers however beat gainers as 122 declined and 89 advanced, while 32 finished unchanged on the Chittagong Stock Exchange.

The port city bourse traded 79.45 lakh shares and mutual fund units worth Tk 24.43 crore in turnover.

NBR vows to crack down on tax cheats

FROM PAGE B1

NBR Member Jahangir Hossain said the introduction of automated systems under the new VAT law will enable taxpayers to submit returns and deposit VAT online.

It will reduce direct contact between taxpayers and VAT officials, as people will not need to call in at the VAT office.

"Taxpayers will be able to deposit VAT directly from their accounts at any bank. The money can also be paid through mobile banking. They will not need to face the hassles of standing in queues."

The automated system will also allow businesses to get their tax refunds automatically, he added.

At the discussion, ERF President Saif Islam Dilal urged the NBR to frame a pro-people budget.

He also recommended the use of tax cards to motivate taxpayers.

National Press Club General Secretary Quamrul Islam Chowdhury proposed the introduction of carbon tax.

Dhaka Reporters Unity President Jamal Uddin suggested the NBR catch big fishes and curb tax dodging to boost revenue collection and ensure compliance.

ERF General Secretary Ziaur Rahman said the NBR should run campaigns to make people aware about the need to pay tax and encourage compliance.

Govt gets 19 more days to take decision

FROM PAGE B1

Senior officials of the telecom division said the PMO already sent back a list of queries on financial and technical issues about both operators. They also analysed the recommendations, the telecom law and other related acts with BTRC's documents.

The parent companies of Robi and Airtel opened talks on a possible merger at the end of August last year and formally applied to the BTRC later. In February this year, a deal was signed on the merger.

In the merged entity, Axiata, the parent company of Robi, will hold a 68.7 percent controlling stake, Bharti Airtel will have 25 percent and NIT Docomo of Japan 6.3 percent.



Md Salimullah, managing director of Jayson Pharmaceuticals, receives QMS ISO 9001:2015 certificate from Ekramul Haque, ISO consultant, at the head office of Jayson Pharmaceuticals on Saturday.



Mohammad Ismail, chairman of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, and Golam Dastagir Gazi, chairman of Gazi Group, pose at the signing of an agreement between the bank and Gazi Communications, a concern of Gazi Group, at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Tuesday. Gazi Communications will provide cyber security for the bank's data centre.