



M Wahidul Haque, chairman of AB Bank, and Moshir Rahman Chowdhury, managing director (current charge), attend a programme to celebrate the 35th founding anniversary of the bank.

Automakers see promise in China car-sharing

AFP, Shanghai

Unable to afford a car, Shanghai university student Long Yi endured an expensive taxi commute across his vast city until he started using one of the car-sharing schemes quickly gaining momentum in China.

Essentially an Internet Age twist on car rentals, car-sharing is attracting Chinese millennials who increasingly demand mobility but shun the burden of auto ownership.

Long, 20, drives himself to school for around 50 yuan (\$7) using EVCARD, a service launched by state-owned automaker SAIC Motor that has compact electric vehicles sprinkled around the city, slashing his travel time and costing one-quarter the taxi fare.

"It is cheaper and more convenient and very flexible. I'll choose EVCARD as my primary mode of transport almost every time," said Long.

After years of skyrocketing China sales, the global auto industry is contemplating slower growth as it convenes this week for the Shanghai Auto Show, putting alternative sales channels like car-sharing in focus.

Long-established in Western countries, such services only began appearing in China in the past two years, but are part of an ongoing

Chinese personal-mobility revolution.

Already bike-sharing businesses have exploded across China, flooding major cities with bicycles that are unlocked by GPS using an app, can be left anywhere and have become critical to countless commutes.

Similarly, drivers typically use a smartphone app to find and unlock shared cars, later parking them anywhere or at set locations.

Dozens of Chinese and foreign companies have now either launched or invested in car-sharing operations, with some making purpose-built cars. Germany-based consultancy Roland Berger forecasts annual market growth of at least 45 percent.

"That is a significant growth opportunity (for manufacturers). There are only a few hundred thousand cars now, but it's growing and it's growing very quickly," said Johan Karlberg, a Shanghai-based partner with Roland Berger.

German giant Daimler launched a car-sharing service last year that has since expanded to seven cities, gaining more than 250,000 registered users, the company said.

Jochem Heizmann, China CEO for Volkswagen, the country's top car brand, told reporters in Shanghai VW would partner with Chinese car-sharing operator Shouqi in multi-

ple cities, partly to boost electric-vehicle sales.

"You have to see the development of such fleets as sales channels," he stressed.

Lynk & Co -- a new unit of Chinese automaker Geely, which owns Volvo -- unveiled in Shanghai two SUVs with built-in touch-screen sharing software developed with Microsoft and Sweden's Ericsson.

"Communities", such as companies or residential developments, can jointly purchase vehicles to share, or owners can share their car for a fee with other drivers who join Lynk & Co's network, said Alain Visser, the company's senior vice president. "It becomes an interesting concept because sharing can reduce the cost of ownership," he told AFP.

Lynk & Co also is partnering with TripAdvisor and Tujia -- China's Airbnb -- on a proposed system combining shared accommodation and cars.

"Instead of entering the (car-sharing) market once it becomes big, we want to make it big," Visser said. Bill Russo, head of Shanghai-based consultancy Gao Feng, said such services will guide auto manufacturing in future.

"You may build them to entertain people in the backseat, or to provide more connectivity so people can be productive. We'll see this segment influence specifications," he said.

Facebook pushes to augment reality through smartphones

AFP, San Francisco

Facebook launched a mission to make smartphone camera windows to augmented reality, focusing on what people have in hand instead of waiting for high-tech eyewear.

While kicking off the leading social network's annual developers conference in the heart of Silicon Valley, chief executive Mark Zuckerberg called smartphone cameras an initial and promising platform for augmented-reality features in applications tailored to synch with the social network.

"I am confident now we are going to push this augmented-reality platform forward," Zuckerberg said, predicting the technology would eventually be incorporated into eyeglasses. "We are going to make the camera the first mainstream augmented-reality platform."

He noted an array of things that could easily fill their roles virtually, such as game boards or television screens, with users being able to easily play or view without need for physical versions.

An upbeat Zuckerberg, who fired off jokes, also showed how digital plants, animals, masks and more could be added to real scenes viewed through smartphone cameras in the same manner that games

such as Pokemon Go let people catch animated creatures in the world around them.

"Augmented reality will help us mix the digital and the physical in new ways," Zuckerberg said during a keynote presentation. "We are all about extending the physical world online." Previously, Facebook had been focused strongly on virtual reality as the next big computing platform, particularly using Rift headgear made by its Oculus unit.

Augmented reality tools unveiled by Facebook were impressive, but unlikely to reach the hands of users soon, according to Jackdaw Research analyst Jan Dawson.

"Facebook has been slow to get into augmented reality and related technologies, focusing instead on the more mature but less mainstream virtual reality," Dawson said in a blog post. "This year's keynote shows Facebook is serious about catching up in this area and competing with Snapchat and others."

Vanishing message application Snapchat more than a year ago began letting users add digital decorations to real-world photos with a "Lenses" feature.

Since the feature launched, "we've become puppies, puked rainbows, face-swapped with our best friends - and begun to explore how Lenses can change the world around us," parent company Snap said in a blog post.



Golam Hafiz Ahmed, managing director of NCC Bank; Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, additional managing director; Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard Bangladesh; Gitanka D Datta, director, attend a programme at NCC Bank's corporate head office in Dhaka. The customers of NCC Bank will enjoy special benefit from Mastercard for its products and services.

Japan's 100-hour overtime cap sparks anger

AFP, Tokyo

Workaholic Japan has unveiled its first-ever plan to limit overtime, but critics want to give it the boot, saying an "outrageous" 100-hour-a-month cap will do nothing to tackle karoshi, or death from overwork.

Tokyo's bid to ease a national health crisis comes after the top executive at advertising giant Dentsu quit late last year in response to the suicide of a young employee who regularly logged more than 100 hours of overtime a month.

The death of Matsuri Takahashi generated nationwide headlines, prompting the government to come up with a solution to punishing work hours blamed for hundreds of deaths due to strokes, heart attacks and suicides every year.

A panel headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has since come up with a plan calling for a maximum of 100 overtime hours a month.

The conservative leader called it a "historic step for changing the way people work in Japan" but critics think the plan should be given its marching orders.

The Labour Lawyers' Association of Japan has slammed the proposed cap as "extremely inappropriate" and "impossible to support". "It's tanta-

mount to endorsing a limit that could cause overwork deaths," said Association head Ichiro Natsume.

Others who have lost loved ones to karoshi agree. "We cannot accept this - it's outrageous," said Emiko Teranishi, who heads a group for relatives of karoshi victims.

"I thought the government was finally going to tackle the issue... But this has turned out to be (a) step backward rather than a step forward."

Teranishi's husband was the manager of a struggling soba noodle restaurant in Kyoto when he committed suicide in the mid-nineties after suffering from depression blamed on long working hours.

"My husband worked for a total of 4,000 hours a year without weekends off. At most, he had two days off a month," she said, adding that he was pressured to work more by his recession-hit employer. "He was depressed. He told me he couldn't sleep or eat. I asked him to take a day off every morning, but he still went to work."

The popular post-war image of a Japanese "salaryman" toiling long hours, drinking with the boss and then taking the last train home has evolved over the decades, but many still spend far more time at the workplace than their counterparts in other modern economies.

Currently, Japanese firms can make full-time employees work far beyond the usual 40 hours a week during busy periods. Overtime is viewed as a sign of dedication at many firms, even if Japanese workers' productivity lags behind that of their US and European counterparts.

And more than one in five Japanese companies have employees whose tendency to overwork puts them at serious risk of dying, according to a government survey published in October. That survey was part of the nation's first white paper on karoshi.

The new rules would limit monthly overtime and levy penalties on firms that don't comply -- both firsts in a country notorious for its gruelling work schedule.

The scheme, hammered out by Japan's biggest business lobby Keidanren and the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, known as Rengo, officially says overtime should not exceed 45 hours a month.

But the proposed changes to the labour laws, expected to be submitted this year, would let employers make workers put in as many as 100 hours of overtime if the office is busy -- a determination made by managers.

Rengo's president Rikio Kozu praised the scheme as "the first step taken toward eliminating karoshi".

Euro zone March inflation confirmed at 1.5pc

REUTERS

Euro zone core inflation was higher than initially forecast, the European Union's statistics office said on Wednesday, while confirming its estimate for the headline figure.

Eurostat confirmed inflation in March in the 19 countries sharing the euro slowed down to 1.5 percent year-on-year from a four-year high of 2.0 percent recorded in February.

But core inflation, which excludes volatile prices of energy and unprocessed food and which the European Central Bank monitors closely, was revised up to 0.8 percent year-on-year

in March from an earlier estimate of 0.7 percent. The core figure remained, however, lower than the 0.9 percent recorded in February.

On a monthly basis, headline inflation was 0.8 percent in March, in line with market expectations, while core inflation was 1.2 percent higher, below the average forecast in a Reuters poll of 1.3 percent.

The revised core data may slightly strengthen the hand of those who support winding down the ECB monetary stimulus, although inflation remains below the central bank's target of inflation close but below 2 percent over the medium term.

The ECB has slashed interest rates into negative territory and adopted a bond-buying program worth 2.3 trillion euros (\$2.46 trillion) to counter the threat of deflation and revive growth in the 19-member currency bloc.

Overall inflation was lower primarily because energy prices rose by only 7.4 percent year-on-year from 9.3 percent in February. In its earlier estimates, Eurostat said energy prices went up 7.3 percent in March.

The statistics office confirmed prices for food, alcohol and tobacco went up by 1.8 percent in March, from a 2.5 percent increase recorded the previous month.

Anis A Khan, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, and Md Shafiqul Islam, managing director of SME Foundation, attend the signing of a deal at MTB Centre in Dhaka on April 17 for credit wholesaling of Tk 5 crore to support women entrepreneurs.

MTB



Omar Faruque Bhuiyan, senior executive vice president of Premier Bank, and Yeamin Sharif Chowdhury, head of business at Transcom Electronics Ltd, attend the launch of Premier Bank Comfortpay Instalment Plan, at an outlet of Transcom Digital in Dhaka on April 12. The bank's credit cardholders will enjoy easy instalment benefit to purchase electronics and appliances from Transcom Digital without any interest.

PREMIER BANK

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e-Tender Notice No. e-GP-01/2016-17 (LTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following works:

Sl No.	Tender ID	Name of work	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time
1	96603	Construction of internal RCC road at Zila Parishad Office Complex Natore.	03 May 2017 17:00	04 May 2017 12:00
2	96718	Construction of HBB Road (i) Kafuria Babur Bazar to J N Lahiri Mandir and (ii) Kafuria Eidgah Road.	03 May 2017 17:00	04 May 2017 12:00
3	96720	Construction of J N Lahiri Sarbojonin Kali and Durga Mandir at Kafuria Union.	03 May 2017 17:00	04 May 2017 12:00
4	96722	Construction of (i) Kafuria Central Mosque and (ii) Vabni Mandir.	03 May 2017 17:00	04 May 2017 12:00

Only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no office/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branch up to 03 May 2017, 17:00. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal.

Md. Enamul Haque
Chief Executive Officer
Zila Parishad, Natore

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