

Bangladesh should embrace Internet of Things: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

BANGLADESH should embrace the "Internet of Things" as it can help the country efficiently maintain key infrastructure, manage traffic properly and boost economic growth, according to experts.

IoT can immediately improve traffic management of cities, increase crop production, and maintain important infrastructure, they told a seminar at the Digital World on Friday.

For example, running air-conditioners at over 25 degree Celsius alone can save \$67,644 a day in Bangladesh and IoT can ensure that.

"The whole world is moving towards this new technical innovation and if we fail to embrace it we will miss our next development scope," said Khursheed Khan, managing partner at California-based Sagacious Solutions Inc, at the seminar titled "Fourth Industrial Revolution and Opportunities of Internet of Things".

Khan said big data analytics, IoT and sensors can give a huge boost to the environment and agriculture, transportation and logistics, healthcare, manufacturing and utilities.

IoT is all about connecting objects to the network and enabling them to collect and share data. Machines, buildings, cars and many more things can be embedded with software and sensors that let them collect and exchange data.

It means people can control temperature of a room using an app or turn on the lights remotely. At city scale, IoT can generate real-time information with sensors in the road monitoring the flow of traffic and a public app showing available parking spots.

Faruk Ahmed Jewel, an expert from the Prime Minister's Office, said using IoT can help cut city congestion by at least 40 percent.



STAR
Crowds throng Digital World-2017 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday.

"So, the government is seriously considering adopting it. Different government agencies have a huge amount of information and we need to use the information to find solutions," he said.

DataSoft Systems Bangladesh Ltd, a local IT firm, is working in many countries on IoT. It is helping the Democratic Republic of the Congo run one of its longest bridges.

M Manjur Mahmud, chief operating officer of DataSoft, said, "We have been able to convince Japan how IoT can help cut electricity bills. Using this promise we are now installing IoT in 10,000 flats in Japan."

M Helal Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the

management information systems at Dhaka University, said IoT can help boost the country's overall growth.

"Billions of devices are connected with each other which are giving us a huge amount of information. We can create new knowledge by analysing the data and it can change our lifestyle," said Ahmed.

Mahboob Zaman, a former president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services, said adopting new technologies such as IoT, artificial intelligence, robotics and augmented reality is needed to grow further.

IPDC organises supply chain conference

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

IPDC Finance Ltd organised a conference on supply chain in association with the International Supply Chain Education Alliance (ISCEA) at Radisson hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

The main objective of the IPDC Supply Chain Conference 2017 was to create awareness of the most topical and relevant opportunities for managing supply chain organisations with more efficiency and responsiveness, the non-bank financial institution said in a statement.

Saifuddin M Khaled, regional operations programme manager of British American Tobacco for Asia Pacific; Ejazur Rahman, CEO of the ISCEA Asia; Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Robi, and Naqib Khan, president of the Bangladesh Supply Chain Management Society, also spoke.

Other panelists included Prof Premkumar Rajagopal, president of Mysore University of Science &

Technology; Jayamal Jayaweera, a former supply chain director of Coats Sri Lanka; Gayani De Alwis, vice-chairperson of CILT Sri Lanka, and Jitan Chandanani, partner for blockchain leader of IBM India.

Mominul Islam, managing director of IPDC Finance, dis-

cussed the collaboration in financial supply chain management.

He also said: "We're very glad to organise such an event for the delegates. I believe that they can gather knowledge and insights of business leaders and supply chain professionals who are redefining

business institutions."

A number of keynotes were presented and panel discussions and breakout sessions took place during the conference, allowing the participants to discover the latest opportunities in supply chain management.



IPDC
Mominul Islam, managing director of IPDC Finance; Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, CEO of Robi, and Ejazur Rahman, CEO of International Supply Chain Education Alliance, pose along with the guests from home and abroad at the IPDC Supply Chain Conference 2017 at the Radisson hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Under-fire WTO meets in Buenos Aires

AFP, Buenos Aires

UNDER fire from the United States, wracked by disagreements over China and unable to kick-start stalled trade talks, the World Trade Organization meets under a cloud in Argentina from Sunday.

The Buenos Aires meeting will be the first in the era of US President Donald Trump, who has pummelled the 164-member body relentlessly since taking office, even describing it as a "disaster."

The Trump administration had made the WTO a preferred target of its "America First" policy, threatening to pull America out of the trade organization it says is hampering its ability to compete. Expectations of any kind of a breakthrough at the Buenos Aires meeting are low.

"There are several subjects on the table. On any of them, we may have some convergences on certain topics, or not, I don't know," was the underwhelming assessment of WTO Director General Roberto Azevedo at a briefing at the end of November.

Argentina's Susana Malcorra, who will preside over December 10-13 meeting, was more upbeat recently, saying a deal was likely to end harmful fisheries subsidies, keenly of interest to developing countries.

She was also positive about the prospects of an EU-Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay) trade deal finally coming to fruition 18 years after talks first began.

"In a context where global trade has been called into question, it is fundamental that two such considerable markets announce they are ready" to seal a deal,

she told AFP.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom hinted on Tuesday that talks between the two sides could continue into 2018, the key stumbling blocks being beef and the ethanol trade.

Washington has been blamed for blocking appointments of judges to the WTO's dispute settlement system, saying it was ineffective and insisting on a more aggressive approach to defending its interests.

The dispute body arbitrates international rows over subsidies or tariffs, among other things playing an important role in the standoff between US and European plane-makers Boeing and Airbus.

"The appellate body will be down to four members from its regular seven-member contingent from the middle of next month," lamented a Geneva trade official. WTO critics say it has failed to shunt forward the so-called Doha round of trade talks, despite 15 years of effort, and point to the body's apparent powerlessness in dealing with problems posed by China, which joined the WTO in 2001.

Beijing wants to be seen by the WTO as a "market economy" but the Europeans and the United States -- for once on the same wavelength on trade issues -- oppose any such recognition, a distinction which would entitle it to preferential economic treatment under WTO rules.

It is currently classed as a non-market economy, which allows the US and others to use a special recourse to levy anti-dumping duties against it if they decide that it is selling its goods -- chiefly steel and aluminium -- at unfairly low prices in other countries.

EU, Japan close gigantic free trade deal

AFP, Brussels

THE EU and Japan announced on Friday they have concluded negotiations for a giant free trade deal while "fighting the temptation of protectionism," in an apparent message to US President Donald Trump.

The trade deal, which the European Union called its biggest ever, must still be signed and ratified by both sides who first agreed to its broad outlines in July.

Once completed it will forge an economic zone of 600 million people with 30 percent of global GDP.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hailed the imminent birth of what he called a "gigantic economic zone" when he confirmed the conclusion of the negotiations for the

Economic Partnership Agreement.

"Japan and the EU will join hands and build an economic zone based on free and fair rules," Abe told reporters in Tokyo.

Abe and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker earlier said the agreement, which had been four years in the making, has "strategic importance" beyond its economic value. "It sends a clear signal to the world that the EU and Japan are committed to keeping the world economy working on the basis of free, open and fair markets with clear and transparent rules fully respecting and enhancing our values, fighting the temptation of protectionism," the pair said in a statement released in Brussels.

With the deal, the EU is seeking access to one of the world's richest markets, while Japan

hopes to jump-start an economy that has struggled to find solid growth for more than a decade. Japan is also hoping to seize an opportunity after the failure of the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, torpedoed in January by Trump.

Under the deal, the EU will open its market to the world-leading Japanese auto industry, with Tokyo in return scrapping barriers to EU farming products, especially dairy. EU officials insist that the deal will be a major boon for European farmers who would gain access to a huge market that appreciates European products.

Hailing the opening of markets, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom told a press conference "this is actually the biggest trade deal we have ever negotiated from the European Union".

The lobby BusinessEurope hailed the agreement as "very good news" for both companies and citizens on both sides and predicted it will lead to "global standards" in new business areas.

"The agreement should remove long-standing tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade," BusinessEurope's director general Markus Beyrer said in a statement.

"It should generate new business opportunities and closer economic ties between two like-minded economies and is of high strategic importance."

Malmstrom said negotiations for trade deals with Mexico and South America's Mercosur states were also at "advanced" stages.

The deals follow in the footsteps of last year's major EU-Canada trade deal, that was completed even as EU-US trade talks stumbled.

The finalisation of the EU-Japan trade terms now paves the way for the signature, ratification and full implementation of the deal, which EU officials hope could be as soon as January 2019.



With the deal, the EU is seeking access to one of the world's richest markets.

Ctg port launches new mobile scanner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

CHITTAGONG port yesterday launched a new mobile scanner, which would help the authority check imported goods faster and provide users with quick taxation services.

This is the second mobile scanner launched at the port. The first one that came into operation in 2010 went out of order on October 30 this year.

"The scanners will also make it easy to catch fraudulence and to stop illegal trade in the port," said Nojibur Rahman, chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) while inaugurating the scanner.

"With the new one, five gates of Chittagong port now have five scanners. We have taken initiative to set up scanners at all the 12 gates by 2018," Rahman said.

The new machine can scan a container within five to 10 minutes, said Apelo Barua, manager for operations at Nuctech Company Ltd.

Beijing-based Nuctech will provide operational and maintenance service for the new device for the next three months, and a new operator will be appointed after that. It took two years to install the machine. There were some problems that



STAR
The new mobile scanner is seen at its launching ceremony at gate number 2 in the port city yesterday.

Apple in talks to acquire music identification app Shazam

REUTERS, San Francisco

Apple Inc is in talks to acquire Shazam Entertainment Ltd, whose software helps users identify songs by pointing their phone at an audio source, according to a person familiar with the situation.

Shazam's smartphone app is already tightly integrated with Apple's Siri digital assistant. Users of Apple's iPhone with the Shazam app installed can say: "Hey Siri, what's that song?" and the app will identify it. But Shazam has other features, such as the ability to identify television shows that do not yet work with Siri.

Tech news website TechCrunch reported the talks earlier, writing that Apple could pay about \$400 million for Shazam and that a deal could be signed as early as next week.

Shazam did not respond to a request for comment.

Privately-held, UK-based Shazam has raised \$143 million from DN Capital Limited, Institutional Venture Partners, and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, among others, over its 18-year history, according to PitchBook, a firm that tracks private venture investments.

The price TechCrunch reported would fall far below Shazam's most recent \$1 billion valuation reported by PitchBook.

An acquisition of Shazam could help bolster Apple's music efforts by making it easier for users to find songs and add them to playlists in its Apple Music service. As of mid-2017, Apple Music had 27 million subscribers, behind rival music streaming service Spotify's 60 million users.